Mark - Commentaries by William Kelly

Remarks on Mark, Mark 9:14-50, Remarks on

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The foot of the mountain presented a far different scene from the transfiguration glimpse of the kingdom, the disciples encircled by a vast multitude, the scribes questioning with them, and the power of Satan in man unremoved. Christ comes down, and all the people in amazement saluted him. Christ challenges the scribes; but what will He answer him who appealed in vain to the disciples for his son with the dumb spirit, his tormentor? “He answereth him and saith, O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me.” Blessed Lord Jesus! perfect are Thy ways. No love, no tenderness, no long-suffering like Thine yet didst Thou feel the faithlessness which knew not how by dependence on God and denial of self to draw on that energy which casts out Satan from his strongholds. Yet even in Thy presence, when deliverance is nigh, how dost thou try the faith and patience of those who learn all in Thee! “And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming.” Not even yet came the rebuke of power. “And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child: and ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him; but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.” It was certainly but a feeble confession; yet was it true, and the heart was to Him only. “When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him and enter no more into him. And [the spirit] cried and rent him sore and came out of him, and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.” It is an admirable picture of the ways of gracious power in the deliverance of man, Israel especially, from the well-nigh fatal possession of the enemy, with a serious intimation to the disciples, wherein lay the secret of their weakness. (Ver. 14-29.)

Alas! it is not lack of power we have to own, but scanty entrance into His mind. The fleshly mind can think and talk of glory here below, but the cross breaks in neither understood nor welcome. “And they departed thence and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying and were afraid to ask him.” (Ver. 30-32.) The truth is that other thoughts preoccupied them, which hindered the inshining of God's grace displayed in the cross, as well as the terrible evidence it gave to the alienation of man from God. The carnal mind which would so end in man was actively at work in themselves; and He knew it and laid it bare before their eyes. “And he came to Capernaum; and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest.” And how gracious and faithful the lesson! “And he sat down and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them; and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.”

Nor is it only the disciples as a whole who need reproof and correction from the Master. As Peter on the mount of glory, at the beginning, so, ere the chapter closes, John betrays the spirit of egoism which shrouds the proper glory of Christ in the very effort of nature to exalt Him. “And John answered him saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.” (Ver. 38-40.)

It is not as in Matt. 12, where Christ is rejected by the power of unbelief under Satan's instigation, which is blind to the testimony of the Spirit of God that it hates and blasphemes. There compromise is impossible, half-heartedness perilous and fatal. “He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth.” When it is a question between Christ and the darkening, blaspheming power of the devil, the only safety is in being with Christ, the only service is gathering with Him. But where no such question is raised, but on the contrary some one, little known and little knowing it may be, is true to the Lord's name as far as he knows it, let us rejoice to own him and the Lord's evident honor put on him, though “he followeth not us.” He is no enemy but a friend of that name which he owns as best he knows. “He that is not against us,” says the Lord in such a case, “is on our part.” So to honor that name in the least thing shall not be forgotten, as also the slighting it, so as to stumble the least believer, is ruinous to him who is guilty. (Ver. 41, 42.)

This leads the Lord into a warning of searching solemnity. “And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eves to be east into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” (Ver. 43-48.) The thrice-repeated burden, “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,” falls on the conscience-stricken like the bell that tolls the felon to his doom. Would that it might kindle our hearts who believe into an unwonted earnestness on behalf of perishing souls! (Comp. 2 Cor. 5:10, 11.)

But there is direct profit for the disciples also. For if “every one shall be salted with fire,” it is also true that “every sacrifice shall be salted with salt;” the former statement, in my opinion, being as large toward man as such, as the latter emphatically and exclusively regards the saints set apart to God. “Salt is good,” concludes our Lord, “but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith shall ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.” How precious and practical the exhortation! The first requisite is this holy preservative energy

in our own souls; and then for one with another a spirit of peace. “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace,” adds the Apostle James.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 9:1-13, Remarks on

The verse which opens our chapter clearly belongs to the discourse at the end of chapter viii. Our Lord's promise was fulfilled on “the holy mount.” Some of those who stood as He spoke were permitted to see “the kingdom of God come with power.” The reference to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem is arbitrary and incongruous. The special form of the promise is worthy of note. In Matthew it is “the Son of man coming in his kingdom;” in Luke it is simply “the kingdom of God.” In the former, the personal title of the Lord, as the rejected but glorious man, and so coming in His kingdom, is made prominent; in the latter; it is the moral character, as usual, of that display which the chosen witnesses were privileged to behold—the kingdom of God, not of man. Mark, on the other hand, was led to speak of the kingdom of God coming with power. The same substantial truth appears in all; each presents it so as to suit the divine design of the gospels respectively. In our gospel the blessed Lord is ever the administrator in power of God's kingdom, and even here, in giving expression to this promised sample of the kingdom, hides His glory as much as possible, though in truth He could not be hid.

Let us remark, too, that those self-same witnesses He takes (ver. 2) and leads up “into an high mountain apart by themselves,” whom afterward (chap. 14) He takes with Him to Gethsemane. What a change from the glories of the one scene to the exceeding sorrow unto death of the other! Yet was the connection close, and the end of the Lord full of tenderness to His own: even as the mention of His rejection and death leads the way to the transfiguration in the three early gospels. What is there, indeed, so real as His sufferings and His glories? How blessed to know and rest on them both in the midst of the vain show of men!

Again, let it be observed that Mark says less of the personal change, and more as to His raiment, than either Matthew or Luke. “And he was transfigured before them; and his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.” He is ever the Servant-Son. As profound in His lowliness as He accepts with dignity what comes from above—dignity which manifests its source by a splendor which stains the pride of earthly glory. In Matthew there is no contrast with fuller on earth, but it is added most characteristically, that “His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light;” a most suited image of supreme glory for the great King. In Luke how wonderfully adapted is the description! “And as be prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.” None but he mentions the Lord thus bowing down before His Father at this very moment; even as he directs us to that which was more personal than any other in the mighty change that thereon ensued.

“And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.” Having already treated of the scene in Matthew, I will not dwell on the astonishing circumstance further than to remark, that the Lord discloses in this type of God's kingdom what popular theologians so dislike—earthly things mingled, though in no wise confounded, with heavenly things. (John 3) There are the glorified, in the persons of Moses and Elias; there are the men in their still unchanged natural bodies, Peter, James, and John; there is the central figure of the Lord, the Head of all things above and below. So it will be when the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is not any more a testimony of word from those who were eye-witnesses of His majesty, but made good and displayed in the day of the Lord.

It is mere irreverence to deride what will be by and by, or what was then beheld anticipatively, as “a mongrel state of things,” “an abhorred mixture of things totally inconsistent with each other.” If transient glimpses of glory, if passing visits of glorious beings have been vouchsafed from the beginning down to our Savior's days, is it that man can read in these no more than a tale that is told? Is there to them no confirmation from the holy mount of the prophetic word which declares that Jehovah's feet shall stand on Mount Olivet, not to dissolve all things as yet, but to be King over all the earth in that day when He shall come and all His saints with Him? (Comp. Zech. 14.) “And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth: and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.” (Hosea “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” It is in vain to pervert this to the eternal state; it is as distinct from that final condition as from the present ways of God. For as the gathering of the Church is essentially eclectic, and in no sense a gathering of all things in heaven and earth into one, so eternity is after all dispensation (), administration, or stewardship, is over. The millennial reign, the kingdom of Christ, is the sole answer to this even as to the other Scriptures. “Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth, as in heaven.”

To resume. In reporting to us the voice that spake from the cloud (ver. 7), Mark, like Luke, was led of the Spirit to omit the middle clause which Matthew gives us, the expression of the Father's complacency in the Son. But this really imparts special emphasis to Christ's title as Son, and the Father's will that they should hear Him; not now Moses and Elias, whom Peter's unintelligent haste had put on a level with Him. The divine utterance, too, is sealed by the sudden disappearance of those who represented the law and the prophets, Jesus only being left with the disciples.

“And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.” If they knew the Scriptures and God's power of resurrection, as the Sadducees did not, certainly the rising from among the dead was as new to them as it is little understood yet by many disciples.

Hence the difficulties of learned men perplexed them. And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at naught. But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.” Our Lord does not dispute the truth pressed by the scribes; but as He points out His own approaching shame and suffering

before He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels, so He shows a similar application of Elias' case in the person of John the Baptist, while the strict coming of Elias or Elijah awaits its fulfillment in the latter day. To faith the fore-runner is already come, as well as the Lord Himself. Unbelief must feel both by and by.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 8:22-38, Remarks on

The cure of the blind man of Bethsaida is not only a striking but a sweetly instructive lesson. Our blessed Lord shows, if I may so say, all possible interest in the case, both before the miracle was wrought and in the mode of cure. “He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town, and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught.” He acts as one would who was deeply concerned, heartily entering into every detail. It is the only instance recorded in Mark of a gradual character; indeed, as far as I know, it is the great standing witness of distinct stages in curing blindness. We have in John 9 an illustrious miracle where sight was given, and not all at once, to the man blind from his birth. But there is a marked peculiarity in the case before us. The fact is that there are two things needful where a person has not seen at all. One is the faculty of seeing, the other is the power of applying that faculty. Supposing a blind man had visual capacity conveyed to him, it does not follow that he could see thereon. He would not be able to measure distances or to judge with accuracy of the various objects before his eyes. In order to estimate aright any such object the habit of seeing, comparing, &c., is indispensable. Not only is this true of other creatures, but of man also. We all acquire this gradually; but, growing up as it does from our infancy, it is apt to be overlooked. So true and important, however, is the practice of seeing, that if a person who had never seen suddenly received his sight, he would not be able at first to discern whether a thing were round or square by barely looking at it; and this, though he might have been accustomed to judge of the very same things by the touch. It is a fact of much interest which seems to me to be intimated in the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida. Though the same conclusion was the deduction of human science scarce two hundred years ago,1 here you have it quietly assumed in the word of God these eighteen centuries.

First of all the Lord takes the man by the hand, and led him out of the town; next, He applied to His eyes that which came from His own mouth, and put His hands upon him. For here He is all through the true servant. It is not enough that the task is done, but the manner of doing it must be that which should glorify God and win the heart of him who is healed. What consideration! what condescension! what taking of trouble, so to speak! A word had been enough. But the Servant-Son of God enters into the case fully, and asks the patient (though He only, He perfectly well, knew all about it) “if he saw aught.” (Ver. 23.) Even in John 9, where the eyes were anointed with a plaster of clay, and the blind man then went and washed in the pool of Siloam, the full cure followed immediately. In the case before us there was a special reason for dividing not the miraculous remedy so much as the effect. The Lord was showing an exercise of divine power, which at first sight seems to be not so striking as those more commonly healed by a word or a touch. The man looked up and said, he beheld men; for he saw persons walking about, like trees. There is no little difference between a man and a tree, but he could not yet distinguish them (especially if, as I presume, born blind).2 All was vague before him. He might, and no doubt did, in his blind estate readily discern between a tree and a man by a touch. But he had not yet learned to apply his new-born vision, and the miracle purposely halved the cure. His mind could hardly confound the men who moved with trees, but his faculty of vision only showed that the two things were somewhat alike: they were as trees walking. It was all as yet confusion to him. There was naturally no aptitude in using with clearness the faculty he had just acquired.

“After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.” “He doeth all things well.” As that is a saying peculiar to Mark, so it is every where a truth illustrated in it; and it is the great point we have brought out here. It was not only that He did what He did with unfailing energy, but the manner in which He wrought was no less admirable. “He doeth all things well.” And never was this more conspicuously shown than in the second application of the Lord's hands to the half-opened eyes, by which the blind man of Bethsaida was made to see all men clearly. “And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.”

Next (ver. 27 and seq.), we have the good confession, not of the Lord before Pontius Pilate, but of Peter before the Lord, against an unbelieving generation. The Lord puts the question to His disciples. “Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.” All was uncertainty, and that is all that man ever, and in spite of busy and laborious efforts, arrives at. The painful, toilsome searching of the creature into things too high for it only ends in perplexity and bitter disappointment. It leaves a man totally short of, and utterly in the dark about, that which, after all, is the only thing of prime importance. Some say one thing, some another; but who, of all the sons of men, does or can say the right thing?

“And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.” Now we have not here, as in Matthew, the Lord pronouncing, “Blessed art thou Simon-Barjona.” How comes that? Neither have we here, as there, the Lord's remarkable address to Peter: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” Why is all this difference? Because Peter is represented as simply saying here, “Thou art the Christ.” Where it is added that he confessed the Lord to be “the Son of the living God,” there the special notice was also given that he was blessed, “For flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” A confession so singularly rich drew out the Savior's recognition of His Father's grace to Simon Barjona. Thereon the Lord also exercises His rights, and gives him the new name of “Peter,” and adds, “Upon this rock will I build my church.” He was the Son of the living God. If He had been only the Christ, the Messiah of Israel, it would not have been a sufficient basis for the Church. His Messianic dignity (in which He is also spoken of as Son of God, Psa. 2) might have been a sufficient rock for Israel, as it was their faith and hope; but “the Son of the living God” was a revelation of His glory that went far beyond it. The moment you have the Lord known and confessed in this His highest glory, He for the first time begins to announce His building of His Church. That new edifice, which takes the place of Christ-rejecting Israel, is founded upon Him who is not only the Christ but the Son of the living God. Accordingly death and resurrection follow as that which not only determined Him to be the Son of God with power, but gives the Christian and the Church their proper character. (2 Cor. 5:15-19; Eph. 1; 2) It is upon this rock the Church is builded. What could show more clearly that the Church is an absolutely new thing? The attempt to make out this sense of the Church in the Old Testament times proves that the true nature of God's present temple is unknown. The important thing is to see the points of distinction and contrast. Those who confound Jewish duties, and experience, and hopes with the revelation of our Lord when the people rejected Him, with the fully developed display of Him in the New Testament and the consequently new responsibilities and joys of the Christian, blot out, not all truth, but every feature that is essentially characteristic of the “one new man” (Eph. 2), and take away what is specially incumbent on the Christian and the Church of God. This, if true, demonstrates the importance for our souls of taking heed to Scripture. There are those who are

so steeped in human tradition, and so unversed in the dispensational ways of God, that to tell them the Church was part of the mystery hidden from ages and only revealed since Pentecost, would be to their minds a revival of the monstrous and wicked error of the Mauichees. But the word of God is none the less positive and perfectly plain about it. And Christian men would do well to search the Scriptures, and spare their reproaches, lest haply they be found to fight against God.

Such, then, was the wide scope, answering to Peter's high confession, in Matthew. The Spirit of God in Mark merely records a part of that confession, and as He designedly leaves out the most peculiar portion of it (“the Son of the living God"), so we have only, and with equal design, our Lord's answer in part. His being the Son of the living God, though owned, we have seen, was not, and could not be, set forth freely and fully, until our Lord, by dying and rising again, put the seal, as it were, to this grand truth; and hence the Apostle Paul was the great witness of it. The first testimony that he renders in the synagogue after his conversion is, according to Acts 9:20, that Christ “is (not only made Lord, but) the Son of God.” Accordingly, also, he brings out the calling, and nature, and hopes of the Church of God, in a way beyond all the others.

But I would call your attention to the fact, that though here Peter only says, “Thou art the Christ,” our Lord charges them that they should tell no man this thing. This He does in all the three synoptic gospels. It is a point of instruction much to be heeded. For first He had asked them, “Whom say ye that I am?” Then, after He had heard the confession of His person from Peter, He binds them to tell none about it. How comes this? It was too late. Full proofs had been vouchsafed. The time was past for presenting Him longer as the Jewish Messiah. It had been fully told the people; and whom did they say He was? But now another thing is not before Him alone, but also set before the disciples—His friends. He is going away; He falls, therefore, back upon another glory that belongs to Him. Rejected as “David’s Son,” He is owned by faith as “the Son of the living God;” but He is also “the Son of man.” He was about to be humbled even unto death, and this could only be in His human nature; even He shall once more return to earth, as the Son of man, in His glory. (Compare ver. 31 with 38.) “He charged them that they should tell no man of him. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” Thus He drops the title of “Christ,” and insists upon His place as Son of man—as the suffering One first, and this from the heads of Israel. He should be killed, and after three days rise again. “And he spake that saying openly.” He forbids them to make known His being the Messiah: that testimony was closed now; there was no good in talking about it; the Jews had refused Him, and would definitively, as the Messiah. He had given them every possible form and degree of testimony; and the effect was that they rejected Him, more especially their religious leaders, more and more bitterly and unbelievingly. The consequence would be His death, as He shows His disciples openly. As Son of man, He was going to suffer, and, as Son of man, to be raised the third day, the real condition of His glory by and by. Accordingly we shall find, at the end of the chapter, the coming again of the Son of man in glory, with His holy angels, when despisers and all unbelievers shall be made the objects of His shame: just recompense of being ashamed of Him and His words before He thus comes.

But there is another thing of vast moment to notice before we close. We have not only a proof of what man is, in the Jews, the most favored of men; in the elders, and priests, and scribes, who only become the most active in the scorn and refusal of the Son of man; but His disciples relish not His shame. “And Peter took him and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about, and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.” What a solemn lesson, that the Lord should find it needful at such a time, when, as Matthew shows, He pronounces Simon blessed and puts special honor on him, to rebuke him thus sternly! How worthless is the fleshly mind even in the chief of the twelve apostles! In rebuking Peter, because of his carnal dislike of the cross of Christ, He could say, “Get thee behind me, Satan,” because it was flesh's unbelief, selfishness, and presumption, and not the less because veiled under a pious form. He never said to a saint, Get thee hence, as He said to the devil when he arrogated the worship due to God. (Comp. Matt. 4:10.3) What was it that so roused our Lord? The very snare to which we are all so exposed—the desire of saving self; the preference of an easy path to the cross. is it not true that we naturally like to escape trial, shame, and rejection; that we shrink from the suffering which doing God's will, if in such a world as this, must ever entail; that we prefer to have a quiet, respectable path in the earth—in short, the best of both worlds? How easily one may he ensnared into this! Peter could not understand why the Messiah should go through all this path of sorrow. Had we been there, we might have said or thought yet worse. Peter's remonstrance was not without strong human affection. He heartily loved the Savior too. But, unknown to himself, there was the unjudged spirit of the world. He could not bear that their Master should be so dishonored and so suffer. There was some unbelief of human iniquity: could the elders, chief priests, and scribes be so wicked after all? Moreover, there was a want of understanding that there was no other way to deliver man—that this was the only means of glorifying God about man's sin. (John 13:31.) Suffer the Lord must unto death, and this under God's hand as well as man's; there could be no salvation without it. And God forbid that we should glory save in the cross, whereby the world is crucified to us and we to the world. Let all know this, the people, the crowd, as well as the disciples: so said Jesus: “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Remarks on Mark, Mark 8:1-21, Remarks on

In the second miracle of the feeding of the multitude we have, of course, a repeated testimony to Christ as the Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel, viewed in the beneficence of His power. It was, indeed, no more than what is predicted of Him: “I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.” This was a very significant token to Israel.

In the case of other rulers there is a natural necessity in general that their people should contribute to their sustenance and grandeur; but the Messiah would be the source of nourishment to His subjects. This privilege appertained to and was revealed of Him alone. There never has been, never can be any other ruler with such a sign attached to his person and with such a character belonging to his rule as this gracious source of supplies to His people. Elsewhere it was the fruit of rapine, robbing the distant to lavish on those at home. The Messiah will act out of His own almighty power and love to Israel. This is the plain meaning of Psa. 132:16. The force of Scripture has been greatly weakened through the bad habit of spiritualizing it; in point of fact, it is losing the interpretation of Scripture when we limit it to such applications. Undoubtedly, one is entitled to take the spirit of such a word as this, and one may see from it how Christ cares for those who believe in Him,

and that He now displays more than ever this characteristic goodness in His loving provision for their need.

But to the great mass of God's children at present on the earth, what idea does the promise of Psa. 132 present? and what meaning except a passing exercise of compassionate power do they find in these miracles? It is evident that the Spirit of God attached great importance to the fact; for the only miracle recorded in all four gospels is the feeding of the multitude, at least the earlier case where the Lord fed the five thousand. This then remains true, that in these miracles the Lord was giving the two-fold witness of His being the Messiah competent and willing to carry out all that was most characteristic of Himself, and what no other prince or king could possibly effect, because even for his own state ordinarily dependent upon revenue derived from his lieges. But the Lord Jesus has this singular source and supply of grace in Him, and His kingdom will be marked by it, so that instead of His burdening Israel or draining the world of its wealth to sustain Him, the Lord Jesus Christ will ever retain the place of the blessed and only Potentate even when the earth owns Him as King. It will be a day when all burdens shall be taken away, and the earth yield her increase. No doubt, men's heart will be opened and “the multitude of camels shall cover Zion, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee; they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.... The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.... For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.” But the great distinguishing feature of the earthly kingdom of the Messiah as compared with all others, will be this affluence of goodness when the divine power undertakes all for man in the great day when the Lord's victory over Satan is made good here below. The millennium will not be man brought into the eternal state, but as yet with a body liable to death. There will still be the possibility of evil in the world; but the peculiar feature will be that, while the evil is not rooted out and sin is still in the nature of man and the power of death may be used in particular cases as a judgment on flagrant sin, yet will the power of good by Christ, the great King, prevail over evil; not the struggle of evil with good, but the supremacy of blessing flowing from Jehovah-Messiah throughout the whole earth. If there were a single spot of the earth apart, a solitary nook of nature unvisited by the stream of blessing in “that day,” it would be, so far, the triumph of evil over good. We know from Rev. 20 that, after the millennium, the nations will rebel; no beneficence on the part of the Lord, no feeding His poor with bread will change the heart of fallen man; nay, nor will His displayed glory deter him from mad opposition. The sad proof will be patent that all who are not born of God in the millennium, will furnish fresh fuel for Satan to kindle the last rebellion against the Lord; but fire will come down out of heaven and dispose of them judicially, caught in the very act. How overwhelming the evidence of man's good-for-nothingness when glory dawns on the earth, just as much as the present evil age is proving man's good-for-nothingness in despising or abusing grace! The Lord showed that there was no deficiency in power even while He was here, for the purpose of displaying the power of His kingdom. He that could feed five thousand, could have as easily fed five millions. He was pleased to use the commonest material on the spot: it was the Lord of all taking what was there, and so it will be in the millennium, the Lord making all things new, not absolutely, but in a measure, and the, figure of the complete work which will close all.

The Christians who only think of heaven blot out the testimony of a vast range of Scripture, whereby the future scene is not merely rendered vague, but gravely falsified, and in the weightiest and most momentous traits too. For the age to come will be for the most part unprecedented. The habit of thus making everything bend to the present moment is most injurious to our faith, because it dishonors Scripture. It springs from and feeds the spirit of infidelity, perhaps as much as any other bias.

The next point I would desire to notice is the special teaching of the two miracles. Why are two facts given us so nearly of the same kind? Is there anything to be gleaned from the circumstances that, on one occasion, the Lord feeds five thousand and twelve baskets of fragments were taken up: and on the other, four thousand were fed, and seven baskets were taken up? There are those who are quick to say that such an inquiry is to be too curious, that it is indulging fancy if we attempt to gather a precise meaning; but, I hope, that few of my readers have such low thoughts of the word of God as to suppose that, besides the mere facts, we have not a display of Christ in moral principle or in a dispensational point of view, in what is recorded of Him. We do need to weigh and prize the simplest incidents related: only do not confine Scripture to your horizon or mine. Let us value every fact; but do not let us despise any lesson God may convey thereby. Let us leave room for all He meant to be enjoyed. Little as we may, any of us, know, we know enough to stand for the truth that all Scripture is not only given by inspiration of God, but profitable; and it is the business of the Christian to beware of indulging in his favorite points or doctrines, and to seek spiritual understanding of all the word and revealed mind of God.

We may inquire then, besides the confirmation of the Messiah's place in earthly glory and His care for His people, what we have to learn from these miracles. Upon the earlier occasion, the Lord gives us the feeding of the multitude first of all, and then His dismissing them and leaving the disciples, as far as His bodily presence is concerned, sending them, under a contrary wind, across a troubled sea, where they tack all night and make little or no progress, while He is upon a mountain in prayer to God. Is not this an evident picture of what has taken place since the Lord dismissed Israel, as it were, for a time, and left the disciples, as far as His bodily presence is concerned? He is above interceding; He has taken a new position altogether; and here are the disciples during His absence on high, exposed to conflicting elements here below. What could more justly portray the actual dispensation—Israel dismissed after His testimony to them, the disciples as now left by our Lord in this stormy world, and Himself ever living to intercede for them? Moreover, when all seems to be vain, the Lord appears unexpectedly, goes on board along with them, and “immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.” What could indicate, as a type, more clearly that, as the effect of the unbelief of Israel, He would leave this world to go on high and take the place, not of king over the earth to supply His people's necessities (for they indeed were not ready for Him), but of priestly advocate in heaven, till He descends and rejoins His tempest-tossed disciples, and brings in healing power and blessing everywhere? (Comp. Mark 6:34-56.) Along with this we see, in the earlier miracle, “twelve baskets.” This, I think, refers to the way in which man becomes prominent. He is made to be the means of carrying out the mind of the Lord. So it will be by and by.

But here in the story before us (chap. viii.) of feeding the multitude, where we have the four thousand men fed and the seven baskets left, there is a notable difference. It has nothing to do with any figure of the Lord's ways dispensationally. We see here the Lord taking care of a certain remnant of His people out of His own pure grace. It is not the testimony to the order of events from His rejection by Israel till His return in power and glory. He is the Messiah, of course; but it is the beneficent goodness of His heart that He is showing, spite of His rejection. The Lord will take up a remnant by and by in the last days, when the mass are apostates, and He will care for them and supply their need.

Meanwhile, He turns to us of the Gentiles, in His grace; and what lack we? But whether taken as an earthly or a heavenly remnant, the scene illustrates the fact and certainty of the Lord's tender care of His people, now that He has been rejected. There is no leaving them here; He is with His disciples all through.

“In those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto him.” Now it is not as in the last that the disciples come to Him, anxious about the multitude. It was His own doing out of His own loving thought. He said unto them, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away, fasting, to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far.” One gathers hence that the object of the scene is not to furnish a type of the ways of the Lord when He presented Himself to Israel and Israel would not have Him. Here it is simply His provision for the remnant of His people, for the poor that go after Him. They might have little perception of His glory, yet He cares for them. It is entirely a question of Christ's goodness in this case, watching over them and providing for them, more than enough, though nothing would be lost. It was their wretchedness that appealed to His heart; and the Lord took the whole thing in hand Himself, though He privileged the disciples to be channels of His bounty.

Accordingly, even when the disciples ask Him “From whence can a man satisfy these men, with bread here, in the wilderness?” He inquires, “How many loaves have ye? and they said, Seven.” The “seven” at the beginning and the end of this case refers, it would seem, not to the question of man's instrumentality (for which “twelve” is the regular symbol in Scripture), but simply to the fullness of provision, scanty in man's eyes, but complete in His eye of grace and power, as well as of that beyond the mere meeting of their present need. It is the Lord's perfect care and compassion for His people. Not only did He satisfy them, but there is completeness stamped upon the whole transaction, to the praise of His goodness and power. “They did eat and were filled, and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand, and he sent them away. And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.”

This is another point of distinction I wished to notice. On the former occasion He left His disciples and went alone; at this time He accompanies them. It has no reference to what is going on with the present dispensation, nor to His ascension in order to the exercise of priestly functions in heaven. What we here behold is the Lord's perfect care for His people, and then His presence with the disciples, watching over them and guarding them in the midst of the difficulties of a perverse generation, superstitious or skeptical, but equally unbelieving before God. For the Pharisees came forth and began to argue with Him, “seeking of him a sign from heaven.” This is most painful, for the fact of asking for the sign shows that they had no serious thought about, and no heart for, the remarkable miracles that had been wrought by the Lord. Yet they must have produced a deep and wide impression; for it was impossible that first five thousand men, beside women and children, and then four thousand, could be thus fed without the thing being noised abroad throughout the country. The question of the Pharisees, I presume, grew out of the speculation, set afloat by the Lord's having wrought these miracles. At any rate, they wanted a sign from One who had provided the greatest in quantity and quality before their eyes. Could they have given a more awful proof of man's unbelief? A. sign! Why what had all the Lord's ministry been? A sign from heaven! Why the Lord was Himself the bread of God which cometh down from heaven; and He had been showing what He was in the fullness of His love to His people upon the earth. It is the capricious, rebellious heart of man, discontented with all that God gives. If God gives the fullest earthly sign, according to His word, for an earthly people, they want a sign from heaven.

The Lord treats this demand with unwonted sharpness. He says, and “sighed deeply in His spirit” as He says, “Why does this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given to this generation. And he left, and entering into the ship again, departed to the other side.” The Lord's refusal is very striking to my own mind. We know that their demand was not from felt sense of need, nor from desire to have that need supplied; the Lord never refused such an appeal. It was not because they were miserable sinners, not because they drew too largely upon Him. They were only changing the form of their unbelief, persistently and ingeniously perverse in refusing all that God's wisdom presented. There was such a multitude and variety of signs as had never before been seen; there was the very substance of every sign in His own person; but there was neither eye to see, nor ear to hear, nor heart to receive what God gives in Christ. He, therefore, abruptly turns from them, enters a ship, and departs to the other side. The truth is, the time for signs was nearly over. There had been abundance given; but it was never the way of God to multiply signs beyond the occasion for which they are introduced; because, although they may rouse persons at the beginning of a testimony from God, if continued afterward, they would frustrate the moral object He has in view, if they would not lose their very character of signs. A miracle would cease to be a miracle, if continually going on.

But deeper than any such question was this fact—the truth of God had been presented in every possible form, with all possible outward vouchers and tokens and seals to awaken, arrest, and attract the chosen people. There was no lack of signs; it was faith they wanted. Accordingly the Lord, when He goes to the other side, charges the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. The omission of the Sadducees is to be noticed in this place. Sadduceeism, no doubt, is a withering evil, but it is not the most dangerous. The leaven of the Pharisees, if not that of Herod also, may have a worse character and be a greater hindrance in the confession of Christ. For what is the leaven of the Pharisees? It is the cleaving to outward religious forms of any kind, which practically hide the Lord and His Christ. It is the effect of traditional influence, and may be orthodox in much; but it is religion—self—that is worshipped, rather than the true and living God known in His Son. The next is the leaven of Herod; that is worldliness, the desire of what will give present reputation or keep up conformity to this world. These are two of the great perils Christians have to watch against. The disciples did not understand the Lord. They thought it was a question of loaves! “'They reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.” Sometimes we wonder at such stupidity in the disciples; but if we reflect on our own history, can we not discern our own dullness in understanding the word of God, our own slowness in following and walking in His will?

Alas! it is too true a picture of our own hitches and difficulties. It all arises from a want of perception of the truth, and grace, and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this again is because we walk in such feeble self-judgment. It is our own undiscerned will that makes His mind in Scripture dark to us. If our eve were but single, if we walked in a spirit of lowly dependence, to do anything but follow the Lord, we should find nine-tenths of our difficulties at an end. But we have an old as well as a new nature, which we do well to judge unsparingly. Through the mercy of God we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; but the old man seeks to intrude and get the upper hand, and so hinders the believer from following Christ simply and fully. This was at work among the disciples. They thought the Pharisees a respectable sort of people, and they were not prepared for their Master's sweeping condemnation. There is no deliverance from any of these obstacles and snares but in Christ; and there is no possibility of practically walking in the power of Christ unless the flesh is judged. Our Lord rebukes the disciples very

decidedly “Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?” It was really so. Our Lord all through treats it as an affair of the heart and not as an intellectual mistake. It is important that we should accustom ourselves to judge things from their moral roots. If we pursue a wrong course, let us beware of excusing ourselves: if we do, we never get either profit by the way nor victory in the end. We must discover that which caused the mistake. What was its source? What exposed us to it? Christ was not our only motive. I believe we never do a wrong thing where Christ is the one object before us. It is not that the flesh is not in us; but it is the Holy Ghost, and not the flesh that has power in us where Christ is the single actuating spring of the heart. What is self-indulgence or the world's esteem to a man who is filled with Christ? This is what the apostle so earnestly sought for the Ephesian saints,” that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” It was not that they might merely have Christ as their Savior, nor only even that they might obey Christ as their Lord, but that they might have Him dwelling in their hearts by faith. It is the soul occupied with Christ to the exclusion of other objects—Christ abiding, as the treasure of the heart; and what power to discern and to act according to Christ where this is so? And what is the effect of an unjudged will? Children of light though we be, light now in the Lord, yet the light is only in Him for us, and we see it not, if we think, or speak, or act far from the Lord practically. Thus it is we neither remember His ways nor understand Himself.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Blind Man of Bethsaida

Mark 8:22-26

This is the later of the two miracles peculiar to the Gospel of Mark. As in the former the Lord led away the deaf man, who could not speak aright, from the crowd apart, so here He took hold of the blind man's hand and conducted him out of the village. The mass of the Jews had already had ample signs in testimony of Who and what He was. It was but for greater hardening of their hearts to see more. They might get their sick healed, they might eat of the loaves He made and be filled; but even the most orthodox sought from Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him; so that He could only groan in His spirit and say, Why doth this generation seek a sign? Had He not given them countless signs? In the sense of their unbelief, which a Syro-Phoenician woman's faith rebuked, the Lord leads aside from the multitude, though He still acts in compassionate grace. This could not fail where they bring distressful need before Him, the Servant not more righteous than gracious.

" And they bring him a blind man, and beseech him that he might touch him. And taking hold of the blind man's hand, he led him forth out of the village, and having spit on his eyes, he laid his hands on him, and asked him if he beheld anything. And having looked up he said, I behold men, for I see [them] as trees, walking. Then he laid his hands again on his eyes, and he saw distinctly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly. And he sent him to his house, saying, Neither enter into the village, nor tell [it] to any one in the village " (vers. 22-26).

It is the gospel of His service; and here, as throughout, we are made to behold the perfect manner in which His mighty works were done. It is not only the power of God ever ready to heal the sick and those oppressed by the devil. The way in which He answered every such appeal was worthy of the Son of God become servant to glorify God and win man. He put His fingers to the deaf man's ears, He touched the ill-speaking tongue. He laid His hands upon the blind man outside Bethsaida. There was no necessity for any such actions. He had but to speak, and it was done. But love is far beyond power; and when man has power to wield it in ever so limited a range, how little he thinks of love! Least of all does he, conscious however scantily of his sinfulness, look for love from the God he slights and dreads. The Lord in the way He wields divine power manifests divine love, and as Man in the midst of men. Nor is there the smallest ostentation but its marked absence: all is done in genuine simplicity as well as tenderness.

We may notice too that in the two miracles the Lord uses His own spittle, as He did also in the cure of the man born blind (told us in John 9). Whatever the reality and lowliness of the humanity He had taken up in His grace, there was divine efficacy in His person; and the sign of this He applies in all three cases, each having its own distinction. When He touched the tongue, He looked up to heaven with a groan, and says to the man, Be opened; and immediately the happy result follows. When He mixed clay with what came of Himself and anointed the born-blind man's eyes, He told him to go to Siloam and wash; and only then did he come seeing. Here the very intent was to mark by the twofold act of laying His hands on his eyes that the Lord would not have the cure partial. It was much to behold men, like trees, but walking. Yet the Lord would not let him go thus; He would give him to see distinctly. He therefore laid His hands upon his eyes, so that he was restored and saw all things distinctly. It was simply the way of love that the blind man might know the deep interest of His heart Who might have dispensed with any or all of these circumstances, and have effected the perfect cure with a word. But what a blank for the man and for our hearts, if it had been only so!

Indeed the instruction was great for the disciples who were then in a measure learning of His ways with Whom they were, and learned far more when He was gone and the Holy Spirit come. The former was no unmeet emblem of Israel's state, and had a sample of the powers of the world to come when the weak remnant shall become a strong nation, with ears opened and tongue loosed to speak Jehovah's praise. The latter in the partial cure might well remind the disciples that they during His earthly ministry did not see more clearly than the man when His hands were laid on him. once. How different when God raised Him up from the dead whereof they were witnesses! Then, He being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit, how great the blessing! Faith needs to have its perfect work, as well as patience. How often men stop short!

How is it with you who read these words? How are you treating Him, His words, and His works? You have to do with Him, whether you will or not. For the hour now is, when the dead have the voice of the Son of God sounding in their ears, and they that hear live. For this He when here prepared men. If He be the rejected Messiah, He is the Son of man and thus the destined Judge of mankind. How would it be with you if the hour of His judgment were come? Could you stand unabashed and unscathed before Him Whose eyes will be then as a flame of fire? Who searches the reins and hearts? Who will reward each according to his works?

What thanks shall one render, when one believes that the same Jesus is the Son of God, not only the true God but eternal life, ready and willing to give life eternal to you who can find it no where else? This is the way, the best way for a saint, the only way for a sinner, to honor the Son. It is to believe on Him; for indeed He is the way, the truth, and the life. Thus believing you do not come into condemnation, but even now have passed from death unto life. So He declares; so may you believe, and never be confounded.

Christian Truth: Volume 6, Source of Defilement, The

As to things that defile, they come out of man. This is true in all things and all acts of evil. They invariably spring from within, from the corrupt will of man. Thus, for instance, it is plain that if the law executes the capital sentence on a criminal, it is not murder but contrariwise the vindication of God's authority in the earth. It is not a question of evil feeling against the culprit, and there is nothing defiling in it. But if you were so much as to injure a man in deed, word, or thought, there you have what defiles. The moment there is that which is a part of yourself, without God, which comes out of you, and you yield to it, there is the taint of defilement. "Murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within and defile the man." Mark 7:21-23.

In a word, we have the doctrine most plainly laid down here that man-that is, man in his present state-is only the source of that which is evil. I require an absolutely perfect One who is outside me to be my life, and such a One I have in Christ. If I am a Christian at all, Christ is my life, and the business for me thenceforth is to live on and according to that good which I have found in Christ. Therefore, the happy man is he who is always thinking of and delighting himself in Christ. The man, on the contrary, who is striving to find some good in himself is under the error of the disciples before they learned to bow to the word of the Lord. His light was too bright, too searching, too severe, too unsparing, for the will of the disciples. They did not accept the truth with simplicity, and therefore they found it a hard saying.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 7:14-37, Remarks on

Now we turn to another subject—the condition of man. We are first shown that religion without Christ is but hypocrisy, and that man's interference in divine things ends in setting God's word aside to keep his own tradition. The next thing we see is what man really is, religious or not. “When he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you and understand.” The Lord here brings to light the broad principle which of itself would account for his sentence on all tradition. Does it come from man? It is enough. How is it that which springs from such a source is bad and untrustworthy? It concerns every soul; for it is no question of controversial strife. Protestant and Papist, beware of slighting the admonition of the Judge of quick and dead. “There is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.” This, if we apply the principle in all its extent, involves the character of tradition; for tradition comes out from man—not a word to man with the authority of God, but a human word that beggarly pride would fain invest with purple and gold to cover its nakedness. This may show the connection; for undoubtedly the Lord here judges the moral issues of the heart and all the ways of man. “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.” The disciples could not understand Him. What a lesson for us! Christ's servants could not understand Him. The very apostles were slow to believe that man was utterly corrupt. Is there any one here that doubts the thorough evil, not merely to be found among men, but of man? Does any one think that human nature can be trusted? Listen to the Savior—the Savior of the lost. “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”

“When he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile; because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draft, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within and defile the man.” There is nothing in the heart of man that so hinders his intelligence as the influence of religious tradition; not only this, but tradition darkens a disciple wherever it works; and one effect and invariable accompaniment of it is, specially, insubjection to the humbling truth that there is no good thing in man. I do not deny that God can bring everything that is good into the heart. For He gives His Son, and in Him eternal life; He washes the believer in the precious blood of Christ and gives the Holy Ghost to dwell in him. Neither do I speak of what is the fruit of divine grace working in man; but I maintain that what comes out of man as such is invariably bad. As to this the disciples were dull of understanding; yet there was not one obscure word in what Christ uttered. Why is it that divine truth seems and is so difficult to apprehend? Our obstacle chiefly lies not in the head, but in the heart and conscience. It is not the bright or the powerful intellect that understands the word of God best; it is the man whose purpose of heart is to serve the Lord. Wherever there is a simple-hearted desire to do His will, “he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” It is not, If thine eye be keen or farseeing; but, “If thine eye be single.” What a comfort to a poor soul that is consciously weak, ignorant, foolish, it may be! Such an one, nevertheless, may have a single eye, and consequently see farther, spiritually, than the brightest of men, whose heart is not unreservedly toward the Lord. What in this case hindered singleness of eye? Why were the disciples so undiscerning? Because they did not like to receive such a tremendous sentence on man. They had been accustomed to make conventional differences.

The Pharisees and scribes, the great men of Jerusalem, were still of a certain value in their eyes, just as you find the vulgar crowd gaping after the sounding titles of the religious world. How little are the mass of God's children emancipated from the delusion, that there is something in these names that guarantees or presupposes real intelligence! Never was it so, and never less than now. Can you point out a time, since Christendom began, when there was such a complete giving up of the mind of God in the places of highest pretension? There have been seasons when the world was more hostile and the form of hatred more formidable, as far as persecution goes; but never was there an hour, when Christendom, aye, Protestant Christendom, had so many swamps of indifference to God's authority, with here and there a standard of rebellion against the truth of Christ. This may seem strong, no doubt; but I have made the assertion according to God's word, and, as far as that may go, with a closer study of Christendom in its various phases than many persons. I am not afraid, then, to re-assert my conviction, that there never has been a display of man's evil heart of unbelief in the shape of indifference, on one side, and, on the other, of enmity against the truth, equal to the present aspect of the age. Even when Christendom mumbled over their devotions, saturated with religious fable, and thoroughly subject to a crafty and ignorant priesthood, the word of God was less known and less slighted than now. The dungeon-wall of superstition is partially fallen, the light of God's testimony has been seen enough to provoke the malice of men. People are energetic enough in these days, but their energy is against the gospel. It is not so with all, thank God; but the peculiar feature of the present age is that the active aggression is against Scripture, an organized rebellion proceeding from professors in the high seats of human learning. Not only daring individuals here and there attack Scripture, but the nominal teachers and heads of the clergy combine to do it with comparative impunity, as if they were determined to concentrate the whole weight of their personal and official influence. This has a voice for us; if we have understanding of the times, let us take care that we stand firmly, conscientiously, and uncompromisingly, though humbly, on

the foundation of Divine truth, caring for nothing else. We shall he counted harsh: this is always the portion of faithfulness. But the name of the Lord is our tower of strength for the last days, as from the beginning. So Paul warns Timothy in his last epistle, as he looked at the perils of these days (which are still more emphatically true now than they were then); and what is the resource for them? Not tradition, but the written word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,” &c. It is not teachers, nor godly men raised up, however precious both may be: nothing but Scripture can be a permanent standard of truth.

As to things that defile, they come out of the man. This is true in all things, and of all acts of evil; they invariably spring from within, from the corrupt will of man. Thus, for instance, it is plain that if the law execute the capital sentence on a criminal, it is not murder, but, contrariwise, the vindication of God's authority in the earth. It is not a question of evil feeling against the culprit, and there is nothing defiling in it. But if you were so much as to injure a man in deed, word, or thought, there you have what defiles. The moment there is that which is a part of your selfwill, without God, which comes out of you, and you yielding to it, there is the taint of defilement. “Murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within and defile the man.” In a word, we have the doctrine most plainly laid down here, that man, i.e., man in his present state, is only the source of that which is evil. I require another absolutely perfect One, who is outside me, to be my life; and such an one I have in Christ. If I am a Christian at all, Christ is my life; and the business for me thenceforth is to live on and according to that good which I have found in Christ. Therefore, the happy man is he who is always thinking of and delighting himself in Christ. The man, on the contrary, who is striving to find some good in himself, is under the error of the disciples before they learned to bow to the word of the Lord. His light was too bright, too searching, too severe, too unsparing for the will of the disciples; they did not accept the truth with simplicity, and therefore they found it a hard saying.

Verses 24-30. We have seen that which cometh out of man, and how defiling it all is. We are now to learn what comes from God, and how full of mercy and goodness this is, delivering those oppressed by the devil. But there was, I am persuaded, a significant previous act in our Lord's going from the scene where He had rebuked the traditions of earthly religion, and the universal sink of corruption in the heart and its issues, which they but conceal. The only real remedy is the deliverance of sovereign grace in Christ who arose from thence and “went into the borders of Tire and Sidon, [those world-renowned monuments of God's sure judgment,] and entered into an house and would have no man know it; but he could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet.” What claim had she? Not the smallest” the woman was a Greek, [or Gentile,] a Syrophenician by nation.” She was from the fertile stock of Israel's enemies, the corrupt and idolatrous despisers of the true God. But if Jesus desired an opportunity to show the grace of God, above all question of right, desert, or any conceivable plea, save that of utter misery cast on divine mercy in Him, never was there a more needy suitor. “And she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.”

Yet if the faith of the woman was to triumph, none the less was it tried. And I consider that it is morally instructive to observe that the richest grace on the part of Christ does not make the trial of faith less but more. The soul that is little exercised never eats the kernel of the blessing, never proves the depths that are in God and His grace.

Mark, precise as his gospel usually is in details, does not give us the particulars of her first appeal to the Savior as “Son of David,” the propriety of which in Matthew is evident. Neither does our gospel bring out His unwonted silence, and the disciples' entreaty, and the firm statement of His mission as minister of the circumcision, for which also we must turn to Matthew.

Nevertheless, even here, our Lord does maintain the principle of “the Jew first;” as the simplicity of faith (what is so genuinely intelligent?) in her urges “and also the Gentile.” But there is more. Grace speaks out the whole truth and strengthens its object to bear it, confess it, and delight in it. So here the Lord adds in verse 27, “it is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.” “And she answered and said unto him, Yea, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.” She is taught of the Lord to take her true place; but she cleaves with undoubting assurance to the certainty that He will not deny His. She was no better than a dog; but is not God full of bounty and goodness even to the dogs? “And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way: the devil is gone out of thy daughter.” It was the blessed and holy ministry of grace to desperate need.

The scene that follows illustrates still farther the Savior's grace; only it is in the ordinary domain of His labors. “And again, departing from the coasts of Tire and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.” What a picture of the impotence to which sin has reduced man—inability to hear the Lord's voice, incapacity to tell Him his need! Such are those whom the Savior heals among the despised Galileans, or anywhere else. “And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.” It is still the service of love, the heart and the hand of the only perfect Servant. “He hath done all things well,” was their astonished testimony. May we ever and for all confide in Him! His right hand has not forgotten; His heart is unchanged; He Himself is the “same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” May we treasure up the look to heaven, the sigh over the earth, the gracious, interested handling of the sufferer, the word of delivering power, the manner and the measure of the cure. Truly, “He hath done all things well.”

Remarks on Mark, Mark 7:1-13, Remarks on

In this chapter the scene is totally changed. It is no longer the accomplishment of promise, nor merely the retiring before the oppressive cruelty of him that was then in the place of outward authority. We have here the Lord morally dealing with, and judging, the religious chiefs of Jerusalem who, in their confidence and pride, undertook to blame His disciples and Himself with them. It was themselves, however, who had made the word of God of none effect through their tradition. Thus we are on ground of peculiar importance at this present time, and indeed at all times in Christendom. For there never has been a time in which this danger has not existed ever since the word of God was given, partially or completely, to the Church. Traditions began to multiply apace when the apostles passed away. As the word of God, more particularly the New Testament, is not in the form of mere command, there was peculiar openness in Christendom to the influence of tradition. In the Jewish system, all was ordered by rule. It was the natural and obvious fashion of the Jewish economy that God regulated all their intercourse, gave

positive injunctions as to the whole policy, left scarcely anything open to His people, but prescribed their private and public obligations, whether individual, family, or social; their religious duties as well as their political. In fact everything was made a matter of plain commandment, and yet even in that system, so inveterate is the heart of man in departing from the living God, that even there we find the leaders of the Jews taking away the people from these expressed commandments of God by putting them under the authority of their own tradition. How comes it that there is this continual tendency in the heart of man and specially of those that take the place of guides of God's people, no matter when or where you look at it, to supplant His word by their tradition? It is because tradition gives importance to man, leaves room for superiority to self. The consequence is that not merely the religious chiefs are thus fond of gratifying their self-importance by imposing rules of their own, but the people love to have it so. This painful fact is brought out in all the word of God. Thus, throughout the Old Testament not only were the priests ever rebellious, but the people also: man never was subject to God, but has continually departed from God, in whatever way He might be trying him. This then came to an issue between the Lord and the Jewish religionists.

“Then came together unto him the Pharisees and certain of the scribes which came from Jerusalem.” They had the highest authority as far as the earth was concerned; they came from the holy city of ancient religion, clothed with the credit of divine law and authority. “And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed hands, they found fault.” Now there was clearly nothing moral in this—nothing that could touch the soul or that affected a man's relationship with God; but it was contrary to their traditions, and therefore they found fault. It is easy to conceive that this tradition may have had a pious origin. There may have been in the minds of these leaders an idea of keeping up before the people the importance of personal purity; for washing the hands would be a very natural sign that God looks for and insists on holiness in the works of His people. At any rate such was the custom expected from every professor, whether from that idea or any other of presenting to the minds of the Israelites their duty in the things of God. They may have pleaded indirectly. No doubt it was drawn from the word of God, because there were certain washings which men always practiced. Thus, the priests were to wash the sacrifices presented to God, as they had been themselves washed at the time of their consecration, and had always to wash hands and feet before entering the tabernacle. It seemed a reasonable and meet inference that this rite, at once simple and expressive, ought to be observed by every man among the holy people in his ordinary dealings day by day. Who in fact could have the necessity of personal purity kept too much before his eyes? But there was precisely where man was in fault. The great principle of the word is that, God being infinitely wise and holy, where He does not lay down any positive injunction of His own, woe to him who infringes liberty. Man, on the contrary, takes advantage of the opening, and, where God has not laid down a law, he makes one of his own. But God has given no warrant thus to legislate; and half the disputes and schisms that have occurred in Christendom are due to this cause. The haste of man to solve a difficulty has recourse to such measures, and the desire of man to enforce his own will where God, instead of laying down anything positive, has left things as a test for the heart, and therefore has purposely abstained from a command. It cannot be surprising that what is thus introduced is almost always evil; but supposing the thing imposed might seem ever so desirable, the principle is always faulty.

I desire to press the immense importance of giving no authority to any rule except the word now written. To hear men of God, to be helped by servants of God, to value an exposition of the truth, is all well, but is a very different thing from an authoritative canon or creed which men impose as binding upon conscience. It is never right to accept thus what comes from man. God alone and His word bind the conscience. His servants may teach, but if they teach aright, it is the truth of God. They bring the word of God to bear upon the conscience, and therefore nobody that understands the place of God's servant, would wish to create a divided allegiance by imposing his own thoughts and words. His proper function as servant, is rather to maintain the undisguised supremacy of God's word, so that the conscience may be put under a positive and increased sense of obligation. Whenever the work is well done, and blessed by God's grace, further question is at an end. This is the true aim of such ministry as Scripture recognizes. The truth is sufficiently brought out that men's consciences should be called into action. The Spirit of God gives divine force to it, so that souls are left without excuse. Even in the preaching of the gospel every unconverted man is under the responsibility of receiving the testimony of God, but still more in divine things, after we have received the truth and have discovered the inestimable place and value of the word of God. It is of all importance that our souls should hold fast and firm, that, whatever the helps imparted through man, whatever the light of God that shines through the vessels He employs, still it is God's light, God's truth; nothing else than God's word ought to be acknowledged as authoritative.

Assuredly the business of a Christian, of a servant of God now, is not to stand between man and God, which was the position of a priest in Judaism, but to put away the obstacles which act as veils, that man may face the truth, and, indeed, God Himself, without being permitted to escape; so that the light that comes from God may shine full upon the conscience and the heart of man. This does not suit man left to himself; it displeases the world, which prefers a distant reserve; and these Pharisees and scribes, though they came from Jerusalem, were really of the world. Hence they reasoned in divine things, as men do now, from principles that are true enough in worldly things: the word was not mixed with faith in their hearts. No doubt, in the outward world, God has left man to himself in great measure, save that He keeps a certain providential check upon him. Government of the earth is committed to human hands, and man comes under the responsibility of exercising or observing that government here below. But still he is left to judge according to the means God has given. There may be certain landmarks God has laid down; for instance, the sacredness of human life, which God asserted before He called out Abraham, and which is a principle as obligatory now as ever it was. “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” This was what God instituted at the time of the flood; but with such-like slight exceptions, man is left free to arrange, according to the circumstances, the various punishments and rewards in this world. But in divine things, the main point is God dealing, by His word and Spirit, with conscience, as immediately subject to Himself. And hence it is, that everything which intercepts the direct application of the Scripture from God Himself to His children is the most positive injury. It is man stepping into the place of God. This at once furnishes a sure test for deciding what is of God and what is not. If you speak to me of helps for understanding the word of God, these exist and are given of God. Such is the object of ministry, which is the service that God has instituted for the purpose of giving effect to His word. But none the less is His word the means of dealing with sinners and of building up His children. True, it is the service of God in His word, not a rival or co-ordinate authority.

On the other hand, tradition is essentially different. It proceeds not from God, but from man. We find the attempt to introduce it even in the New Testament, and while the Apostle Paul was in the midst of his labors. The church at Corinth shows, perhaps, the first attempt of the enemy to insinuate human tradition. They had allowed women to preach in the public assembly, which the apostle denounces. There was a good deal to be argued for it. People might have reasoned—if women had gifts, why should these not be used If gifts were possessed suited to bring out the truth of God, why not turn these to the utmost account in the Christian assembly? The word of God positively interdicts this. It allows that a woman might prophesy; as for instance, the four daughters of Philip, the evangelist, no doubt, did prophesy. The question is, where and how? In the first place, they were not to prophesy to men, because that would be an inversion of God's order. A woman is not suffered to teach or govern. Consequently, while they were allowed to bring out whatever light they had, even of the highest character, yet it

was to be done in subjection to the word of the Lord. A man, as the apostle shows, is the glory of God; whereas the woman is put under subjection. Man has the official place of superiority to the woman. It could, therefore, never be supposed that God would give a gift to a woman in such sort as to set aside, in so important a manner, the difference established from the beginning, and sanctioned and insisted upon in the New Testament. In the next place, within the public assembly, woman's speaking in any form, even asking a question, is forbidden. They are to ask their husbands at home. It was this very thing that drew out the apostle's condemnation of tradition. The Corinthians seem to have allowed and contended for liberty to be given to these gifted women to speak in the assembly. But the apostle takes them to task, and urges that if any of them were spiritual or prophets, they would be subject to the word of the Lord. On the other hand, if any of them were ignorant let them be so. What a blow to the would-be-wise speculators to hear their theories treated as mere and willful ignorance! “If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.” These high-flown men were really ignorant of the mind of God.

This, it is evident, is exceedingly important, because it puts us in presence of the great truth which the Church of God has forgotten and trampled under foot in all ages. The word is not to come out from ourselves. We want the word that comes from God to the Church; and not what the Church, so-called, pretends to utter. The Church never teaches nor rules. That which comes from man or from the Church has no authority whatever: on the contrary, the Church is called to be in the place of subjection to Christ; she is not in the place of the Lord, but of the lady. Jesus is Lord; He alone commands the Church, which is put by God in the place of the woman, as subject to the Lord. This at once becomes a very weighty difference in practice. For we can all remember the day when we thought that human rules in the things of God were right and necessary. It seemed to us as if the ecclesiastical state could not be held together without human regulations. We judged that the present state differs so from what existed of old, that it is impossible to apply the word of God in its integrity to the Church now, and, therefore, new rules must be introduced to suit our days. In admitting such a principle, you do two things—You dishonor the word of God, for the word of God is not a dead letter, like man's: the word of God is a living word now as then. Every Christian believes this for the salvation of his soul, but not for his walk and conduct every day; and more particularly not for the worship and government of the Church. Is it not, on the very face of it, a mischievous principle to allow the word of God to be a living authority in one thing and to treat it virtually as obsolete and dead in another? Is it not venturing near the fatal slide of infidelity I do not say that the persons who speak and act thus are infidel; but it is an infidel principle to consign to the grave any part of God's word; to maintain that all that part which dwells so largely upon the union and worship of Christians, the ways in which they are to walk together in the confession of their Lord, and in common subjection to the word and Spirit of God—that all this is out of date and no longer obligatory on the saints. But you do another dishonor by such a course; for you not only dethrone the word of God from its supremacy in the conscience, but you exalt the commandments of man; you slight the true authority and recognize a mere usurper. It is evident I must have something that governs me. If I am not simply subject to the word of God, I am sure to bow to the word of man. Some may prefer their own thoughts, if they think their own wisdom is superior to their neighbors. But the general form taken is not so much an individual showing self-sufficiency, but rather the union of a number who encourage one another to join in this race of independence, which involves disobedience to the word of God. We are living at a time when Satan does all to lower Scripture, and when God has brought out its value and pressed its practical moment more home upon the conscience than in former days. There was a time when not one of us had ever been exercised upon this subject. It was taken for granted that a human supplement of rules is necessary. But any rule invented by man for the government of Christians is a tradition, and of the worst kind, because it is thus made a thing of positive authority for faith and practice.

The Pharisees in our chapter brought out this conventional washing of hands, and pressed it upon the disciples. The Spirit's comment is that “the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.” Every spiritual man must feel the quick, cutting condemnation of the whole principle, root and branch, which breathes through the language of the Spirit of God. However subdued the tone may be, the whole thing is treated as utterly weak and childish. The washing of persons is classed with the washing of cups and pots. Many like things they do. What a religion! “Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?” It is remarkable how the Lord answers them. It is not by discussing the source of the tradition or showing its futility. He deals at once with its broad character and its moral effect on the obedience that is due to God. This is, doubtless, a most admirable pattern for every Christian man. The Lord lays bare the moral fruit of these traditions, and thus the simple escape the snare of the enemy. “He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you, hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

And this is His method of proof. He takes one of these noted traditions and shows that, plausible as it might seem, it was but the cunning slight of deceivers, led by one more cunning than themselves, and destructive of the true fear of God. It drew men into disobedience, and made excuse for sin or rather denied it. Thus their zeal for tradition blinded them to what ordinary conscience must have felt, “for laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men.” He does not call it a wicked tradition: it was.” of men” and is not to be held. “And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.” There is the process: give up what is of God and then you will fall into the hands of man. There is great importance in the principle. It is not a comparison of things as to whether this is better than that. The evil is laying aside the commandment of God and preferring man's tradition to it. The only thing that has claim upon the Christian heart is what comes from God. Whatever God wills, whatever is His revealed mind on any given subject, demands the believer's reception and obedience. “For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.”

What is the harm of all this? It may not be wise, but is merely innocent, a person might argue. But the Lord does not judge so lightly of nullifying God's commandments by the deference that men show to the will and word of man. “For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and whoso curseth [or, speaks ill of] father or mother, let him die the death [surely die].” There we have the plain revelation of God's mind. To honor parents is right and of God; to make light of them unfits man to live in God's estimate. How did tradition dissolve so plain a duty? “Ye say if a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother, making the word of God of none effect through your traditions which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do.” Just consider what an issue this was. A man sees his father and mother in want; he has received in earthly goods that which would relieve them, but the tradition mongers have invented a plan to benefit religion so-called at the cost of filial duty. If one said “Corban,” the duty was totally changed; and that which would have been due to the parent must now be devoted to the priest. No matter what the need of father and mother, that word “Corban” estopped all action of heart or conscience. The leaders had devised the scheme to secure property for religious purposes and to quiet persons from all trouble of conscience about the word of God.

But the Judge and Lord of all meets this at once. Who had given them authority to say, It is Corban Where had God warranted such a practice? and who were they that dared to substitute their thoughts for the word of God? It was God who called on man to honor his parents, and who denounced all slight done to them. Yet here were men violating, under cloak of religion, both these commandments of God! This tradition of saying “Corban” the Lord treats not only as a wrong done to the parents, but as a rebellious act against the express commandment of God.

For my part I never heard of a tradition introduced into any religious body, or imposed upon any individuals, that was not contrary to the word of God. Such are the rules made by man in the things of God. Indeed, all religious societies have a system which they do not even profess to have derived from the word of God. There are those now in Christendom that cast themselves upon the word of God alone; but such one would not lower to the level of a religious society. I say, then, that wherever you find men who join together in these voluntary societies, large or small, they introduce a system of their own for the purpose of distinguishing themselves from others, and regulations that they consider necessary for the establishment or extension of the society. They invent and impose human rules, which not only differ from the Scripture but contradict it. God's word is a living reality, and a complete standard of truth and practice. Everything that man adds as a supplement is a deformity; it is that which, as it does not flow from God, is inconsistent with the light. Man is incompetent to regulate what belongs to God.

Thus, persons say it is impossible to go on unless you have rules about ministry; it would not do to have everybody rising up and attempting to minister. It is freely admitted that, if there were not the looking to the Holy Ghost, there would be confusion; and that even where there is faith in Him, there is always the need of self-judgment why one does this or seeks that; but God is equal to all the difficulty. If we submit to the word of God, nothing can be more distinct or positive than that there is no such thing as a universal right to minister, on one hand, and no such thing as a process or any human means of conferring a title to minister upon a man. Not the Church, but Christ; not the subject woman, but the risen man and Lord can call to the work of teaching the saints or of preaching the gospel. It surprises many to hear that there is no such thing as a human institution to warrant the preaching of the gospel. A single text would destroy my statement, if it were not true; but no scripture can be brought forward. The general practice of Christendom has no divine ground whatever for its justification. Hence they are obliged to take their stand upon tradition, which contradicts the plain word of God. For if any Christians have the power to preach, which comes only from the Lord, they are not only at liberty but bound to preach. It is a question of positive responsibility to Him before whose judgment we must all be made manifest. The Lord, if He lights a candle, does not intend it to be put under a bushel, but to be set on a candlestick. It is at man's peril if he attempt to hinder the going forth of the energy of God's Spirit. Whoever has the power of the Spirit to preach, should go forth and use it: woe to him if he does not.

Take another case. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a person set apart by any human mode simply to teach the Church. Whereas when we look around, we see one and the same principle, running through a vast variety of forms, from the Pope down to the ranting preacher. All have got their self-devised methods by which none can be a minister in the denomination, unless he go through their own human process. But such a routine is wholly unsound and contradicts the word of God, and every Christian person is bound to give effect to this by renouncing in every way what is contrary to the word of God. Do you think and say that this is too hard? Then it is you who are too bold, not I. For am I not asserting what I can prove? You have your Bibles, and can search for yourselves. But it may be said, Was there no such thing as ordaining? Certainly there was when apostles or apostolic men constituted elders, &c. But our Lord still sends, as He used to send, men out to preach the gospel. But I contend that a human rite, before they permit souls to preach to the world or teach the Church, is a tradition of men and contrary to Scripture. You will find in Scripture that there were persons appointed by the apostles to take care of tables; persons chosen by the apostles or their envoys to a certain work of supervision. Some were called elders and others deacons; but neither the one nor the other was necessarily a preacher or teacher. It is nothing but a blunder to confound elders and deacons with ministers of the word as such. Those who were evangelists, or pastors and teachers, exercised their gifts, not because they were made elders or deacons, which they might not be, but because they had a capacity from God to preach, teach, or rule. To confound these gifts with eldership is a great mistake. When once the difference is seen, it clears the way and brings one either outside the traditional paths of Christendom, or, if disobedient, within the range of our Lord's rebuke.

May we all bear in mind how deeply we need to watch against the spirit of tradition! Wherever we impose with absolute authority a thing that does not proceed from God Himself, it is a tradition. It is all very well to take counsel of one another, and it is not a happy feature to oppose others needlessly; but it is of all consequence that we should strengthen each other in this, that nothing but the word of God is entitled or ought to govern the conscience. It will be found that, when we let go this principle and allow a rule to come in and become binding, so that what is not done according to that rule is regarded as a sin, we are gone from the authority of the word of God to that of tradition, perhaps without knowing it ourselves.

The Lord here shows convincingly where these Pharisees and scribes were. They had never considered that their principle of Corban made void the word of God. But let us, too, bear in mind that after we have had any divine truth pressed upon us, we are never the same as before. We may have been simply and honestly ignorant then; but we are thenceforth under the increased yoke of God's known mind, which we either receive in faith or reject, and harden ourselves by rejecting, in unbelief. Therefore, let us look to the Lord that we may cherish a good conscience This supposes that we have nothing before us, which we cleave to or allow inconsistent with God's will. Let us desire and value nothing but what is according to His word, lest peradventure any of us be left where Christ leaves these Pharisees, under the terrible censure that they made void the word of God through their tradition. If but one example was taken up, it was a sufficient sample of the things they were doing continually.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Deaf and Stammering Man

Mark 7:32-37

This is one of the two miracles peculiar to the gospel of Mark, the other being the cure of the blind man of Bethsaida (chap. 8:22). They both illustrate the prophetic service of the Son of God. He had come to the lake of Galilee.

" And they bring to him [one] deaf and hardly speaking, and they beseech him to lay his hand on him. And having taken him away from the crowd apart, he put his fingers to his ears; and he spit and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven he groaned, and saith to him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and be spoke aright. And he

charged them that they should tell no one; but the more he charged them, the more abundantly were they publishing [it]. And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear and the speechless to speak " (vers. 32-37).

The minute accuracy of the Holy Spirit in recounting Christ's miracles is admirable. This case differs from others, in that the sufferer is not said to have been absolutely mute, but to have had an impediment of speech, or speaking with difficulty, as well as deaf. Nevertheless the Lord takes especial pains with him. The manner reveals the divine Servant's grace. There was no question of His power. Ordinarily He healed all that needed it in a moment, no matter how extreme, as when an unclean spirit was the cause of the dumbness rather than physical inability or defect. Here He was pleased to manifest His tender interest in detail, and His compassionate love no less than His power to heal. He does much more than what those besought who brought the patient to Him. Putting the hand on the needy one was the usual sign of blessing; and less than this, a word, would have been enough, if so the obedient Lord had seen fit to God's glory.

But He took him aside from the crowd apart. For here it is not the crowd He thinks of, any more than the haughty scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem. Just before He had met the desperate need of the Syro-Phoenician on behalf of her demoniac daughter on the borders of Tire and Sidon. Now He had come through the midst of the borders of Decapolis, where, as the prophet had long before predicted, light was to shine for a despised remnant when darkness brooded over the mass with city and temple dead to the rejected Messiah (Isa. 9:1, 2). So apart from the crowd He took the deaf man, and put His fingers unto, if not into (as the preposition may mean according to the sense required), his ears. But more than this; having spit, He touched the tongue of the stammerer.

He marked in both acts how all depended on bringing Himself personally to bear on the actual wants. He who wrought was man, but no less was He God, the Son incarnate and on earth, in His pitiful love serving God and man. It was not only that He applied what came from within Himself to the man's tongue, but looking up to heaven He groaned, and saith to him, Ephphatha, that is,

Be opened. Power truly went out of Him, and love was its spring in devotedness to God Who is as truly light in His nature as love is the character of its energy, which His own service was manifesting. And thus, if He deigned to touch the man so intimately, He looked up to heaven whence He came in a love that abides unchanging and above all evil, yet groaned in deep sense of it, whilst He said to him, Be opened.

The afflicted man was but an emblem of the state of Israel, unwilling alas! and unable through unbelief to hear God, or to speak out their own misery and His praise. But as brought to Him he set forth the remnant on whom light dawned in a region and shadow of death. And " straightway " (a word so characteristic in the Gospel of His service) his ears were opened, and the bond or tie of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke aright. If the unbelief of the people and its chiefs made their blessing impossible, the poor of the flock prove the all-suffering of His gracious power, and reap the great blessing of faith, be it ever so small. And the love which so wrought will encourage a remnant in a future day, who will re-commence the Jewish history in the land, till it become a strong nation in that faithfulness which is unwearied and will never forget the promise.

For the present all was vain; and He charged them to tell no one, but the more He did, the more a great deal were they its publishers. Yet, true as it might be in word, it was not faith in the heart, but rather extreme astonishment. Even so what a comment on Christ's service " He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear and speechless to speak."

But how is it with you who now read God's testimony to Jesus His Son? Have you heard His voice? For He still speaks in His word; and they live who hear Him; and they follow Him, for they know His voice. Amidst the Babel tongues of Christendom they know it, and there is none like it; for it reveals to their souls God, and God as Father in quite a new way proper not to man even innocent but to the Son already come Who has given us understanding that we may know Him that is true. Truth is in none other; but He is not only the truth, but the way and the life. " Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." His word cannot deceive, His word only; and what He has done is according to the same perfection: above all is that work which He wrought on the cross, by which we that believe have now received the reconciliation.

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"Be of good courage: it is I; be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the ship, and the wind ceased." Mark 6:50, 51.

"When they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Him, and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was.... And as many as touched Him were made whole." Mark 6:54-56.

This is a little picture of what will be the consequence, of the Lord's return to the earth. When the Lord and His disciples rejoin the shore that He has left, when He comes back again, whatever there is of human woe, wretchedness, weakness, sickness, in this world, all will flee before the presence and touch of the Son of God. He will then and thus manifest His goodness.

Accordingly, what we have here is the. consummation and triumph of all ministry in His own ministry. The disciples are shown in their weakness meanwhile, but encouraged by the prospect of His return in power and glory, when all shall be made good that the Lord has ever promised, and that He had led His people to expect in this world. It is a good thing for our souls to realize that while our Lord is away we are not to be discouraged by difficulties—not cast down if the wind is contrary and ourselves toiling in vain, yet not in vain. It is He who has sent us across that troubled sea; it is He who meanwhile intercedes for us, and as surely will He come to us. When He does return, all that is lacking He will supply, all that hinders will be removed, and then will the universe duly, fully exult in its Lord, our Lord and Master, when He shall be exalted from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. This may cheer us in any little service that is before us now. It is instruction for the service of the Lord, beginning with His own rejection in shame, and ending with His glorious return, when all sickness and misery will disappear before His presence.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 6:30-56, Remarks on

THE latter part of the chapter, as well as the former, is singularly full of instruction for the service of the Lord. First of all, we had the Lord's own portion. Not only was He refused in His title of King or the Messiah, but despised as God's servant. They heard His doctrine and were astonished at His wisdom no less than His power; but there was one thing that outweighed all in their minds— “Is not this the carpenter?” and so He was. It appears, hence, that our Lord really thus wrought. He was not only the son of a carpenter, but a carpenter Himself. The Creator of heaven and earth spent a considerable part of His sojourn in this world in this lowly labor day by day.

Our Lord, accordingly, shut up from doing great deeds, turns to an unobtrusive work. Although debarred by their unbelief from rendering a conspicuous testimony to His glory, He did lay His hands upon “a few sick folk and healed them.” There was no such thing in our Lord as mortified feeling; He turns calmly from the scorn that hindered His mighty works there to occupy Himself with cases few and inconsiderable. Can we overlook, even in this, Christ's perfection as the servant?

The next thing we saw was the sending out of the twelve. There was the combination of two elements in them, hard to reconcile. They were to be placed in circumstances that would leave them open to the contempt of every one. They were to have no money in their purse, not even two coats, not shoes but sandals: they were to be without scrip or provision for the way. What could seem to be more helpless or more dependent than their condition? Yet none the less they, being sent forth as the messengers of the King, were invested with His own power. One remarkable proof of it was the power given them over unclean spirits. “He began to send them forth by two and two [there was association in their service] and gave them power over unclean spirits.” And so sent out, not only did they preach that men should repent, but they cast out many devils and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them. The paramount thing in the mind of the Lord was the dealing with the power of Satan. There is much unbelief among men as to this. The world has grown old in material inventions; and as times pass over the earth, men get so accustomed to the power given to man over external nature, that they are apt by these very circumstances to forget and deny the unseen power and wiles of Satan. It was, therefore, of great importance that the disciples, who were called and sent by God's authority, in going forth through the land of Israel, should be clothed with the divine power, as far as it was communicable for Christ's sake.

But there is another thing, too, which is of great. importance for the service of the Lord. As they called men to repent, so there is an astonishing answer in the conscience. The word reaches the heart even where it is least likely, as in the case of Herod, who is the instance the Spirit of God gives us here. Where men do not repent, still there is conscience, and the word does not fail to probe it. They may not heed the warning, they may turn from it, they may try to forget it and may succeed for a time in stifling all right feeling: but the barb is there, and although, as in a strong man, the effect of a wound may not be palpable for a time, still when the day of weakness comes, then the old wound re-appears, and what youthful vigor enabled him to slight may give increasing trouble till the whole scene is closed. We have in Herod the history of a soul that had his conscience reached by the word of God, but nothing more. We know well that there is such a thing as resisting the Holy Ghost on the part of unconverted men; it is the commonest thing possible, where God's word is known, though it is not only resisting the word, but the Spirit of God. Therefore it was that Stephen said, when addressing the Jews, “Ye do alway resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye.” The Holy Ghost so far uses the word as to touch the conscience; and whosoever refuses this, resists both the word and Spirit of God. In Herod's case it was only John's testimony, but it was a mighty one, as far as the conviction of sin was concerned. John the Baptist did not pretend to bring in redemption; his main object was to point to One who was coming. But there was a mighty work produced through him in leading men to the sense that they could not do without the Lord. Thus he brought before men that all was ruined in the sight of God, and that so far from things being prosperous or happy, the ax was lying at the root of the tree; judgment was at the door. And so it was: only that, first of all, the judgment that man deserved fell, by grace, upon Christ. That was the unlooked-for form in which divine judgment took place then in the cross. It was a most real dealing of God; but it was a judgment for the time stayed from falling upon the guilty, which fell upon the guiltless Son of God, and thereby redemption is accomplished. The whole work of Christ for the Church of God has come in during the time of man's—Israel's—being left by the Lord to himself. It is the time of God's long-suffering, the world being permitted to follow its own way in the rejection of the gospel as much as in the crucifixion of Christ. This is what the world is doing now, and soon to consummate, when judgment will come. Thus, conscience is shown in a man that felt what was right and heard the word gladly for a time. But there was no repentance, no submission of his soul to the conviction that for a moment passed before his mind of what was true, just, and of God. The consequence was, that circumstances were so managed by the enemy, and permitted of God, that Herod should evince the worthlessness of natural conscience even as regards the very person whom he had owned as a prophet. But at any rate all was lost now: and a guilty hour at a banquet, where the desire to gratify one as bad or worse than himself, ensnared his weakness and involved his word. There is the end of natural conscience. Herod orders what he would not have conceived it possible for him to do. But we little know the power of that unclean and subtle adversary, the devil. It is just the counterpart of what the Lord was doing in grace by His disciples—He gave them power over the unclean spirit. Men repent, and the power of Satan must be broken in order to this. Here, on the contrary, was a man who knew he was in an evil case; but the power of Satan was never really broken. There was no going to God in the sense that he could not deliver himself. The result was that Herod went on till in this evil hour the terrible deed was done; all was over, and he, no doubt, given over to despair or indifference. Had there been the sense of the grace which is in Christ, there was grace enough to have blotted out that or any sin: but the heart that refuses to bow in conscience to God, never acknowledges the grace there is in Christ.

Having thus, again, a little sketched the truth in this part of the chapter, as regards the principles of God for guiding in service, we may pass on. The apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. Now there was great simplicity in this, and a most wholesome thing it is for anyone engaged in the Lord's work to go to Jesus with what has been done and taught. It is well to examine, and perhaps rehearse; but to whom can we do it with safety but to Jesus? There is such a thing as going out in service, but there should be the returning and telling Jesus all that we have had to do or say. There may be occasions where it is well and comely to cheer others with the wonderful works of God; but there is no time where it is not well and wholesome to go to the Lord about it. In His presence there is no danger of being puffed up and thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. There we learn how little we are and the defectiveness even of that which we most desire for the edification of one another. Our Lord thoroughly shows His interest and sympathy in this, and says to them, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.” Well for us if we needed thus to rest more; that is to say, if our labors were so abundant, our self-denying efforts for the blessing of others were so continual, that we could be sure that this was the Lord's word for us, “Come ye into a desert place and rest awhile!” I am afraid that sometimes we rather need to be stirred up to feel what a claim souls have

upon us, what we owe not merely to the saints of God to seek their blessing but to every creature, for we are debtors to all. Having such a Christ as we have, we ought to feel that we have riches enough for every. thing—riches of grace in Him, not merely for the saints of God, but for the poorest of sinners. The twelve had so discharged their mission that our Lord could tell them thus to turn aside and rest awhile. There was more than rest for the body: with Him what repose for the soul! It is a good thing at times to be thus alone, and yet not alone—alone from man that we may be with the only One who can give us fresh strength and, at the same time, adequate lowliness for the better discharge of our service, whatever it may be.

They depart then into a desert place by ship privately. Now it is the Lord's ways of goodness that I think so well worthy of note in this place. We do not make enough of the Lord; we are not quite simple in our thoughts of His interest with us in all the details of circumstances day by day; we do not always think of Him as a real, living, tender friend occupied with us and intent upon our good and even deigning to care for our bodies, as well as our souls. Here is the proof of it as to the twelve.

“And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.” This is exceedingly sweet, because His object in retiring was to have given His disciples leisure: they had not time, so much as even to eat, and the haste of the multitude was really an intrusion; and yet the Lord at once turns to the crowd in love. Here again there is no such thing as the slightest expression of disturbed feeling. There was no coldness shown to the intruders. On the contrary, He enters upon this fresh service with the same alacrity that He had turned aside with His disciples in order to give them a little rest by the way. More than that, He looks with compassion upon the multitude “because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.” He, at least, knew no leisure; at any rate, where did He ever take advantage of it, although there was infinitely more to try and weary Him as a man than ever fell upon any other? At once He turns to teach these needy men that which they little knew they needed.

“And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him and said, This is a desert place and now the time is far past. Send them away, that they may go into the country round about and into the villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.” Oh! do we not see the reflection of ourselves here? “Send them away.” Was that all the disciples could think or say? Had they not profited more by the past experience of their Master? Had they not profited by the grace the Lord had been for so long a time displaying towards poor, shepherdless Israel? “Send them away.” Send them away from Jesus! Without refreshment from Jesus! This was what even disciples could propose to the Lord Himself. Is not this what we learn of our own hearts? Do we not continually discover our little ability to count upon grace and to turn its boundless resources to meet present difficulties When we have seen the Lord's wave, we may admire them; but faith is especially shown in knowing how to avail ourselves of what is in Christ for the want that is actually before us. Here the lack was in others; but what a lack in themselves, when the unbelief of disciples thus vents itself to the Lord? “Send them away that they may go and buy bread. But he answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat.” It is always so that He acts— “give.” He loves a bountiful giver: He was so Himself and He was now about to open the hearts of the disciples to feel aright. It was not only what was needed in an authoritative mission throughout the land of Israel, when the kingdom was going to be set up; but now it was a heart for the poor, despised, and wretched in Israel. The Lord would give the disciples His own sympathies. He would make them know what they themselves lacked—teach them to feel what there is in Christ, even for the men who had no feeling for His wants, no consideration for the Lord in the retirement that He had sought. But this does not change the grace that is in Christ. Whatever may be the fault of another, we have to look well to it that it brings out from us the patient wisdom of grace. It is the hardest thing we have to learn. Here the disciples break down; but it was in the presence of One who only turned it to the account of leading them to a perception of His own grace. This is the great point of the whole chapter; it is the fitting of others for the service on His own approaching and entire rejection.

Here we have not only adequate power, but adequate affection. Power over the unclean spirit we have seen; moral power through the word, even over a natural man's conscience, had been proved; but now we have the perception of the Lord's feelings, His compassion for a multitude, even though unbelieving. There are many who truly believe in the love the Lord has for the Church; but they do not at all understand the deep pity He has toward poor man as such. Now this the Lord was showing here. It is not a question merely of believers, but we have persons who, it is plain, were merely seeking to get what they could from Jesus; following Him on their own account—not for life eternal, not because of their sins, nor was it for the miracles even that they had seen, but for what He could give them for this life. The Lord did not refuse even this, but the disciples knew nothing of this grace. They had authority conferred on them; they had proved communicated power along with this; they had come and told the Lord what they had done and taught. But where was their affection answering to the Lord's? That they had it not, is betrayed by their words to Him. The Lord had now to communicate His own thoughts and feelings to them; and He does it after this sort. “He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat.” They do not need to go: they do not need to buy. What Jesus tells them is to give: “Give ye them to eat.” “And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread and give them to eat?” This is another working of unbelief in them. Not that they had the least thought of going and buying; but they wanted to put their insuperable difficulty before their Master. But what do we need such an one as Christ for, if not for that which we cannot even touch? The greater the difficulty, the more suited is the occasion for the Lord to display Himself. He is Lord of all; and if He is, what can a difficulty be, but only an appeal to His power, and which shows it was ever beyond measure. “Give ye them to eat.”

“He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? Go and see. And when they knew, they said, Five and two fishes.” This is a feature that I think it well to notice, because it is important practically. The Lord loves, however truly working in His own power, to make use of that which we might despise in human wisdom. Moses may plead his impotence; but the Lord will make use of that man of slow speech. If he employ Aaron too, He will put the sentence of death upon everything that flesh leans upon. So now our Lord draws upon the resources that were already in the hands of the disciples. Not that such things as they had could have availed without Him; but that He is ever with us, in one way or another, ever ready to work—and bless according to His almighty power and goodness.

When they bring word that there were five loaves and two fishes, doubtless it was with the conviction that no answer could be less satisfactory. How wise they were in thinking it a vain thing that such a multitude could be fed by anything that they possessed! But it is the way of God to make use of the weak and little, as truly as to abase that which is self-confident of its greatness. And as the Lord was about to act upon this very principle with the twelve, He was now teaching them the same as to the feeding of the multitude then around them. It was the exerting His own creative power on that which was utterly contemptible, at least in human eyes. The five loaves and two fishes seemed to be absurd for such a multitude. But what was it not in the hands of Jesus?

But He does another thing. He commands that they should sit down by companies upon the green grass, and they sat down in ranks by hundreds and fifties. The Lord is not unmindful of outward order and decorum in His arrangements. He was about to work a stupendous miracle, and He arranges the people carefully, bringing before their eyes the conviction of what there was in Him for the need of man. He was really there, the promised One, that was to feed His poor with bread. Where were they that they had never thought of Him, that they did not count upon such love as this for a still greater want than the bread that perishes for the body? But it was the Lord acting from His own goodness, and in no respect even according to the mind of a disciple.

The multitude was unprepared for the work; but the disciples were just as blind. They no more expected what was coming than the multitude. Our being believers is no proof at all we shall have faith for any particular exigency before us. Present dependence upon God is necessary to give us a just thought of the Lord's ways; otherwise we may be as foolish as if we had no faith at all; and we shall be sure to be so, if we do not measure the difficulties by Jesus. Bring Him in and the difficulty is at an end.

But, further, the Lord employs the disciples between Himself and the multitude. How continually we find the Lord returning good for their evil, putting honor upon the poor disciples who so little appreciated His feelings of love and compassion! He does not distribute the bread directly, as if He made no account of His servants. He meant to show His disciples that the love of Christ delights to work in human channels. The same unbelief, which on one side sees nothing in Jesus, on the other is apt to overlook and deny the use Jesus makes of suited instruments to dispense His blessings in this world. But as it was Jesus alone who was the source of it all, the disciples were to be the channels, both learning and teaching what grace could do to them, and through them. The disciples, accordingly, take the bread from the hands of Jesus; and thus it is that the supply is provided for the vast multitude. It was the Lord's way then, and it is His way now. The wonders of His grace are not as it were all reserved for His own exclusive hand: for although He alone is the constant, active spring of grace, yet at the same time He works by whom He will, and He puts often the most honor upon the least comely member; for as we know it is in nature the most vital and essential member that is the most guarded and the least apparent, so it is in His body the Church: “He that glorieth let him glory only in the Lord.” He Himself was among them as “he that serveth.” It is in no way the Lord showing the worth of this one or that one, but displaying His own grace and power according to His own sovereign will. But the disciples must learn that, if they were rebuked, and their unbelief made most apparent, the Lord's grace was not altered towards them; may His grace could employ them immediately afterward to be the distributors, to the famishing multitude, of the bread of His providing. What grace toward them!

The whole scene is most instructive, and particularly so as giving us to see the manner of His own service, and the failure of others. “When he had taken the five loaves and two fishes He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and break the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.” The very fragments far exceeded the provision they had at first, but even the fragments were not to be forgotten or despised. What simplicity of care, even where He insured that there should be the testimony before their eyes of the miraculous character of the whole transaction!

The next scene has also its lesson for us. “Straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.” It was one of the great signs of the Messiah that He would satisfy His poor with bread, as you may remember in Psa. 132. The Lord ought to have been thus recognized; but He was not. Accordingly, He sent them away. The people, instead of being gathered to the Lord as to their King, have been for a season, at least, put aside. He has dismissed the multitude, because of their unbelief; He has departed from Israel for a time, and gone on high to take the place of intercession. And while the Lord is there, the disciples are exposed to all the storms and fluctuations of this lower scene. “And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them.” It is a little picture of what was to be accomplished by and by. The Lord is gone on high now; He is not with the multitude, neither is He in bodily presence with the disciples. He has left the Jews for the time, He is also away from the disciples. They have their work to do, but apparently they make no progress. But in the midst of the contrariety of all things around them, He comes again. “About the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and they cried out. For they all saw him and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, “Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased.”

Then we find that, having come to shore with the disciples, the Lord accomplished all that was spoken. “When they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him. And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch, if it were but the border of his garment; and as many as touched him were made whole.” It is a little picture of what will be the consequence of the Lord's return to the earth. When the Lord and His disciples rejoin the shore that He had left, when He comes back again, whatever there is of human woe, wretchedness, weakness, sickness, in this world, all will flee before the presence and touch of the Son of God. He will then and thus manifest His goodness. Accordingly what we have here is the consummation and triumph of all ministry, in His own ministry. The disciples are shown in their weakness meanwhile, but encouraged by the prospect of His return in power and glory, when all shall be made good that the Lord has ever promised, and that He has led His people to expect in this world. It is a good thing for our souls to realize that while our Lord is away, we are not to be discouraged by difficulties—not cast down if the wind is contrary and ourselves toiling in vain, yet not in vain. It is He who has sent us across that troubled sea; it is He who meanwhile intercedes for us; and as surely will He come to us; and when He does return, all that is lacking He will supply, all that hinders will be removed, and then will the universe duly, fully exult in its Lord, our Lord and Master, when He shall be exalted from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth. This is what the final circumstances of the chapter typify. It may cheer us in any little service that is before us now. It is instruction for the service of the Lord, beginning with His own rejection in shame and ending with His glorious return, when all sickness and misery disappear before His presence.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 6:1-29, Remarks on

THERE are three divisions I would make in the portion before us, in order to examine it more conveniently: first, the unbelieving rejection of Christ in “His own country;” secondly, the mission of the twelve; thirdly, the power, yet alas! fatal weakness withal, of an unpurged conscience, as illustrated in king Herod's behavior to John the Baptist.

First, the unwearied Servant comes into His own country, followed by His disciples. “And when the sabbath-day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him, were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him.”

But what a lesson! The power of His teaching was owned, and the mighty works done by His hands; but even the despised Nazarenes were stumbled at the lowly Lord—the lowly Servant—of all. The meanest of mankind is not free from the same spirit of the world which blinds the highest. In truth the god of this world blinds all that are lost. The fact may come out more conspicuously in the princes of this world, where resources cannot help them to discern and proclaim the Lord of glory; but the universality of the moral blindness is shown in such conduct as that of the men of Nazareth to the Lord Jesus. That the true heir to the throne of David, to speak of His regal glory, should be a “carpenter” was and is too much for flesh and blood. And yet, when it is believed, the grace of His humiliation is as striking, as the need for it was urgent and absolute, if God was to be glorified and man delivered according to His mind. It is clear also that the grace of all He became and endured is only rightly seen by those who see in Him the Son—He is the true God and eternal life.

Here, however, even as prophet He is rejected; and Jesus bows to it as the common lot of those who labor for God in a world which knows them too well to pay them honor, and yet knows them not, as it knew Him not. “A prophet,” said He, “is not without honor but in his own country and among his own kin, and in his own house.” And as thus He speaks, so He acts, or rather does not act. For “he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.” How admirable the perfection of His service! It seems to me that nothing displays it more than such ways as these: “He could there do no mighty work.” Yes, He, the Creator of all, the Sustainer of all, could do nothing mighty there. He was the ever dependent and obedient man who had come to do not His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. “All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made;” yet He could there do no mighty work. Blessed Lord! greater art Thou to me in Thy weakness thus, than in Thy strength, whereby all things consist. And yet there was the gracious exercise of healing as far as was morally consistent with the people and the place in God's eyes. For He did lay His hands upon a few sick folk and healed them. “And he marveled,” adds the Spirit of God, “because of their unbelief.” This did not, however, hinder His testimony in the neighborhood; for He “went round about the villages teaching.”

Secondly, He called the twelve and began to send them forth by two and two, and gave them power over unclean spirits, and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only, &c. I do not think the importance of the Lord's sending out His servants, whether the twelve or others, is adequately estimated by most. It was not yet, it could not be till His death and resurrection, that their mission could have its full character of world-wide grace. Still it is a most precious principle, this sending out of His messengers with a message of grace; as it was a new thing in the earth. And what a tale it told of the real, though hidden, glory of Him who sent them! For who could thus commission, and qualify with power over unclean spirits, save one who was consciously divine? And what injunctions for His ambassadors! “No scrip, no bread, no money in their purse, but shod with sandals, and not two coats.” Truly His kingdom and His service were not of this world: else would the Lord have provided otherwise. Yet they went forth with the fullest sense of authority. “And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place.” How wise and careful of the dignity of His messengers, as well as watchful lest the message should be compromised by the self-seeking of those charged with it! “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.” That He was the Son of God, the Savior, did not lessen but aggravate the criminality of those who despised Him in their persons. “Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city.” The substance of this preaching was that men should repent. There is no divine work in the sinner without repentance. There may be a sort of belief of no value without it: indeed nothing is more common in Christendom. But it is not so where the Holy Spirit is at work, who plows up the conscience as well as brings home to the heart the good seed that may be sown. External signs accompanied them; for they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

The third point to be noticed now is the solemn history of conscience in king Herod; who, on hearing the fame of Jesus, imputed the miracles to John the Baptist, as risen from the dead. There was the usual variety of opinion and uncertainty among men: but Herod's bad conscience made him positive that it was John whom he had beheaded. What a torment even here it is, unless in the yet more desperate case of those who are religiously seared! the Holy Spirit then turns aside to give the account of the circumstances, and to explain why Herod was thus uneasy and perplexed. The wicked Herodias, whom the tetrarch had guiltily married, though she was his brother's wife, had sought her revenge in vain. For, spite of his censure, John stood high in Herod's esteem as a just and holy man; and Herod, having heard him, did much and listened gladly. But there the fair show ended. Satan found the way to shut him up to a course from which there was no escape, save by repentance and the acknowledgment of his sins. It grew out of a royal revel where Herodias' daughter danced to the content of Herod and his guests, and drew from the king the rash promise, with an oath, to give her what she asked to the half of his kingdom. Now was the opportunity of the vindictive adulteress, who instructed her daughter to demand at once the head of John the Baptist upon a dish. And the king, (whose fear for John had no higher source than nature,) while very sorry, yields for the sake of his character before his guests, immediately sends one of the guard to dispatch the prisoner, and presents his head to the damsel, as she also does to her mother. What an evident net of Satan's laying for the feet of one who was not without feeling! and how powerless is conscience, where God's servant is in one scale and the poor plighted honor of man in the other! How simple it all is in God's presence! The devil's promises are better broken than kept.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 12. The Seed Left to Grow

Mark 4:26-29

THIS is a parable peculiar to the Gospel of Mark, and therefore characteristic of the divine design. It is as far as possible from having any analogy to the leaven in Matt. 13, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened. Christ’s service is here set out first and last, marking for the kingdom of God the unexpected fact of His seemingly leaving things to take their course between His action at the beginning and that at the end.

“And he said, Thus is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast the seed upon the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, how he knoweth not himself. Of itself the earth beareth fruit, first a blade, then an ear, then full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is presented, immediately he despatcheth the sickle, because the harvest is arrived” (vers. 26-29).

Matthew gives a complete view in its seven parables of the varying phases of the kingdom of the heavens, and especially in view of the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews and of its special form, “the mysteries of the kingdom,” while the rejected King is on high, before He returns as the glorified Son of Man in possession of the universal inheritance.

Mark was led to dwell on the Sower, as the fullest expression of the Savior’s personal ministry, thwarted for the most part, but fulfilling the purpose of grace in such as have ears to hear. Then he records like Luke the solemn admonition that follows. The lamp was not to be put under “the bushel” or under “the bed,” but to be put on its stand. God’s testimony exposes the true character of things, and tests the witness himself; who, if he makes it his own, has more given, and if not, loses what he has. If the lamp was to shine openly, the truth was to be valued personally.

Then Mark alone adds the beautiful comparison of the Lord’s relation to the work which has been cited. He would prepare His servants for the trial of faith that awaited them in His absence. He carefully guards against the difficulty which has often been expressed, and sometimes weakly evaded. For those who know Him reject the unworthy thought that He absolutely abandons all care over His work here below, and yet more, that He Who knows all things knows not how it fares with that on which He labored. Our Lord took pains to say that the kingdom is “as if”; not that He did not watch and work diligently, any more than that the husbandman does no more than sow and reap, without intermediate interest or services. These dealings are through other scriptures fully revealed, which the parable assuredly does not in any way contradict.

The aim was, while affirming His personal work as ushering in God’s kingdom and His gathering the fruits at the end of the age, to mark emphatically how it should be left while He is on high; but this with fullest confidence that His sowing would come to the just and expected result. We have, therefore, here no thought of seed destroyed by the enemy’s power, nor of failure through the flesh, nor of the choking influence of the world, any more than of darnel foisted into the field unawares and spoiling the crop. All goes well, though the great Servant is hidden in God: just “as if a man (after sowing) should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knows not how.”

Jehovah’s messenger had been sent before Messiah’s face to prepare His way; but he was imprisoned and slain. Messiah came Himself proclaiming the gospel of God’s kingdom, and saying that the time was fulfilled, and the kingdom had drawn nigh. The cross, not the throne, was before Him; and He begins to call servants and to make them fishers of men. For though the unclean spirits obeyed Him, and disease vanished at His touch, even then the men of repute and leading taxed Him with blasphemy, because He forgave sins as God only can. He therefore, knowing all that was to befall Him, provides for the progress of God’s work in His rejection unto death, and shows how nothing should hinder its completion.

So, even in Isa. 49:3-6, we have Jehovah saying, “Thou art my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified. But I said, I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for naught and in vain: nevertheless my judgment is with Jehovah, and my work with my God. And now, saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant, that I should bring Jacob again to him (though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorified in the eyes of Jehovah, and God shall be my strength); and he saith, It is a small thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I have even given thee for a light of the nations, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

Similarly here too nothing shall destroy the gracious purpose of God in Christ; and His humiliation on one side and rejection on the other only give it luster and force. “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.” The apparent frustration for a while secures in the end, and glorifies God and Christ all through. It appears as if He who began and will end had no more to do than the man who, having sown his seed, sleeps and rises, yet the seed springs up and grows, he knows not how. God has so ordered this creation that of itself the earth brings forth fruit in the case supposed, first a blade, then an ear, then full corn in the ear. And so it is spiritually, without visible intervention of His righteous Servant on high.

But when the fruit is presented, He despatches the sickle immediately to reap, since harvest is arrived. It is the contrast of His two advents of personal action, with the unseen advance of what He has sown and what He will reap. On this His own can count without hesitation. God’s work, of which Christ is the doer, can fail in nothing to glorify Himself.

Have you, dear reader, a sure part and lot in this work? Are you content with flesh and its glory, though God pronounces it all to be as grass? Oh, receive His living and abiding word, that you may be born again, if you have not received it already! This is the word which in the gospel is preached to you. The Lord Jesus sowed what produced fruit; and this goes on still. It is of faith that it might be according to grace. How welcome should this be to one who knows himself a lost unworthy sinner! The word reveals Christ to you as God’s gift; and fruits follow when you receive Him and life in Him. Apart from Him you can do nothing. May grace give you while owning yourself ungodly and powerless without Christ, to receive Him on God’s word, that you may go on your way rejoicing!

Remarks on Mark, Mark 3:7-35, Remarks on

JESUS was now made manifest in the holy grace and power of His ministry, the vanquisher of Satan, and—withal subject to God, superior to ordinances even as Son of man and the asserter of God's right to do good in an evil world. Much as man might like to profit for his own interests by His power and the mercy in which it was wielded, enmity to God in Him soon displayed itself. The self-righteous and the profane take counsel how to destroy Him.

But, His hour not being yet come, Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea, retiring from the hypocritical malice of His enemies, but unwearied on the errand of love on which He was sent. “And a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem; and they about Tire and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did came unto him. And he spake to his disciples that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. For he had healed many; insomuch that they

pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues." (Ver. 7-10.) After all, how little can man arrest the stream of blessing! Till God's time arrives to yield to the cross, the stream of testimony may be diverted, but it will flow to the eternal joy of the poor and needy who bow to Jesus. In the cross it overflowed. But the Lord, intent on the best blessings for man, provides against the over-pressure of a crowd too engrossed in the relief of bodily weakness and suffering; while He refuses the testimony of the unclean spirits, compelled to bow and own His glory. (Ver. 11, 12.) It was not for such to make Him known. He received not testimony from man as such, much less from demons. What was the value of any recognition of His person unless it were of God's own working by the Spirit?

Far, however, from hiding the light under a bushel, our Master now enters on a new and momentous step in the testimony of grace. "And He goeth up into a mountain, [for ministry has its source on high, and in nowise has its sanction from the multitude,] and calleth unto Him whom He would; and they came unto Him, and He ordained (or appointed) twelve that they might be with him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal diseases and to cast out devils (demons)." It was an act not only new and strange to man's eye, but in truth independent of Israel and man, and most significant in every point of view. The Lord separates Himself from men to God and summons in sovereign choice whom He would; and they came. And if He caused twelve to be with Him specially and to be sent by Him, it was, as in His own case, with marked prominence given to preaching, but with title and ability to heal diseases and expel demons; and even among the apostles there was a peculiar place assigned from the first to Simon, surnamed by Him Peter, and to the sons of Zebedee, whom He surnamed Boanerges, followed by the rest, though one of them, Andrew, was certainly among the first who saw and followed by Jesus, and was the means of bringing to Jesus his own brother Simon. But there are last who become first, and the Lord, who calls and orders all, alone is wise and worthy. What a testimony to the condition of men and things around! Men, the Jews, needed to be preached to; all was out of course. It was not a question of heathen only. It was in the midst of self-satisfied Israel that the lowly Son of God thus wrought.

On their coming home, a crowd again assembled so that they could not even eat bread. But His kinsmen felt the reproach of the world and went out, at the singular tidings to lay hold on Him as if He were out of His mind! They were ashamed of a relative, mad to their thinking, who virtually condemned all the world, especially in what He had just done. It was nature, always blind in divine things.

Not so merely, "the scribes which came down from Jerusalem and said, he hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the demons He casteth out demons." They were filled and guided of the enemy, and knew well it was no case of a madman, but of a real power which cast out demons. This their malice attributed to Satan in their effort to explain, weaken, and defame what they could not deny. The energy which dealt with Satan, in mercy to man, was owned; but if they owned it to be of God, their religious importance, their occupation, their gain was gone. And the highest of occupations is proverbially the basest of trades; and trading in souls and truth or falsehood exposes men to Satan. And the fatal die was cast. And these proud teachers, setting up to be authorized of God to reject His Son, sunk into the merest slaves of Satan. How solemnly and with what unbroken calm the Lord deals with them! "And having called them unto Him, He said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." It was not only self-contradictory and attributing good to the evil one, but blasphemous; yea, it was to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit; and judgment, eternal judgment, is the sentence of His lips, "because they said, He hath an unclean spirit."

The concluding scene (ver. 31-35) is the grave and fitting sequel; for therein the Lord, in the bearing of a crowd that surrounded him, renounces as it were all natural ties, were they the nearest ones of His mother and His brethren, substituting His disciples, whosoever should do the will of God, in the place of that relationship to Him from which apostate Israel was falling.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 3:1-6, Remarks on

JESUS is in the synagogue upon another Sabbath day; and there was a man there which had a withered hand, and they watched Him whether He would heal him on the Sabbath-day, that they might accuse Him. How remarkable it is that Satan gets an instinctive sense of what the Lord was going to do. Satan outwits himself in his servants by expecting good from the Lord and the Lord's people. This is a remarkable thing. Again, if you find a child of God doing something wrong, the world feels it at once. Even they have an instinctive feeling of what the child of God ought to do. They know that he has no business with the pleasures and vanities of the world. They are surprised to see a Christian there. Why is this? They have not a bit of conscience themselves. Those who have got a purged conscience or those who have got no conscience at all, are far more likely to see what is right than those that carry a bad conscience. The man who had no conscience at all offers to follow the Lord wherever He goes. There was no struggle in it, no reality, no moral purpose. It was the mere vanity of the flesh, the same kind of presumption that said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient." The flesh always assumes its own competency, whereas faith feels that it is only God who can work anything good and can ripen the fruits from trees of His own planting.

These men, I must repeat, who were assembled in the synagogue, expected the Lord to do good. They were looking for this; but they judged from their own thoughts what an awful thing it would be to heal on the Sabbath-day! Our Lord knew what they thought about it, but faith and love are very different things from human prudence. Mere prudence would have led a man not to have given them the smallest excuse, but grace does not mind giving people handles if they are disposed to take them. Grace is bent upon pleasing God, whether people like it or not; and Jesus therefore says to the man that had the withered hand, "Stand forth." He gives it a publicity and stamps the character of the transaction in the most manifest manner—makes it a sign of what grace is, before them all. "He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days or to do evil? to save life or to kill? But they held their peace; and when be had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand, and he stretched it out, and his hand was restored whole as the other." But those that would not let our Lord do what was good, were ready, even as He hinted Himself, to do what was evil on the Sabbath-day. They conspired to kill Him, the Lord; and to kill Him, for what? Because He brought the goodness of God before their very eyes; and they hated God. They would not have allowed it to themselves for a moment, that Jesus was even a good man; so blind and perverted is the judgment when the heart is not right! All the grace of Jesus only appeared to their eyes as the most abominable iniquity. We may well think what the heart of man is, and learn hence what our own natural thoughts and feelings are—not a whit better than theirs. The

point of this second tale is not so much the passing away of mere ordinances in presence of the rejected Christ, or the supremacy of His person above the highest earthly claim; rather is it the necessary superiority of grace, as God's character and work in a world of sin and misery. How came this man with a withered hand in Israel? It was through sin somewhere, and the evident token of misery. Could God rest where there reigned either the one or the other? Was either the manifestation of God? And what were these proud sabbatarians, these enemies of grace and of Jesus? Were they, or was He, the true witness of what God is? Not more surely were they false representatives of God's character than Jesus was the manifestation of God's power as well as of His love. Jesus showed both in that word, “Stretch forth thine hand” and by its restoration to be “whole as the other,” proved that God, the goodness of goodness, was there. And He was there, not maintaining the Pharisees in their thoughts about His law, but vindicating His own grace; for grace alone can bring blessing into a sin stricken world. This may suffice for the general teaching of the second Sabbath-day, which I think is full of instruction, as giving us the witness that our Lord bore, His patient, gracious ministry in deed as well as in word.

But a few words must now be said upon our relation to the sabbath. When God sanctified and instituted that day, whether you take the time of creation or the giving of the law, it was emphatically the seventh day and no other. No man could have been thought to honor God, had he kept the fourth or fifth, or any other but the last day of the week. Instead of this, to have kept the first day of the week would have been an act of rebellion against God. How comes the mighty change? Is it that the first day is simply substituted for the seventh day? Is this what Scripture teaches? Taking the Acts of the Apostles, we find there that the apostles and others used to go on the Sabbath-day into the synagogue of the Jews—used to teach the Jews on that day, whenever there was an open door. On the first day they used to meet with Christians to take the Lord's Supper, or at any other services which might open. There was no such thing as dropping one day for another. Had it been a substitution, they would not still have gone on the sabbath-day with the Jew, and on the first day with the Christian. Yet they did both. At first such of the Christians as had been Jews went to the synagogue; and they were at liberty to take a part in reading Scripture. If this were done now? generally, the person would be considered an intruder; but in a Jewish synagogue it was allowed and welcomed. The apostles, therefore, and others, were perfectly justified in using this liberty for the truth; they were acting in the spirit of grace. Wherever we can go with a good conscience, and without joining in anything that is contrary to the Word of God, there one may and ought to go, if it would be a service to the Lord. But where one is required to join in that or with those we know to be opposed to the will of God, how are we free to go? Are we at liberty in anything to make light of what we know to be disobedience? But in this case there was nothing of the kind; for at the synagogue they simply read the Word of God and gave leave that it should be expounded. Who could say that this was wrong? If we knew that the Scripture and nothing but the Scripture was read upon any day of the week in a so-called church or chapel, and there were perfect room left to help, should one not be delighted to go, if indeed there would not be a kind of obligation upon us? If it were a mere crowd of heathen reading the Scriptures, one might enter it, and speak with them. The door would be, I believe, open, on the Lord's part, and grace would take advantage of it.

These facts are enough, then, to show that it is a great mistake to suppose that the Lord's day is a mere substitution for the sabbath. On the contrary, the Lord's day has a far higher character than the ancient day of rest. Not that one would for a moment forget that the sabbath-day was divinely appointed. It was founded upon two great truths of God. First, it involved, and displayed, and promised, as it were, (in type at least,) creation-rest: it witnessed rest after God had finished His work of creating. The second notable connection with the sabbath day was this: it was the day of law. On these two occasions of surpassing moment to man and Israel was the sabbath brought out by God with peculiar solemnity. The sabbath-day rests therefore upon divine ground; but it is the ground of creation and law. Is either of the two the Christian place? In no wise. Are you a mere child of man, a creature now? Then you are assuredly sinful and must be cast into bell. Are you on the ground of law? Then you are lost and condemned, for you are under the curse. But the Christian is on the footing neither of creation nor of law. On what is he then? He belongs to the new creation and stands in grace; the clean, exact contrast of the foundations of the sabbath-day. Hence it is that the first day of the week comes before us as a wholly new thing, the holy memorial of divine blessing, proper to the Christian individually and to the Church of God. And on what basis does it rest? When Christ rose from the grave with a new life to give to every soul that believes in Him, at once Israel is set aside. Risen from the dead, what more connection had He with Israel than with the Gentiles? He was entirely above them both. We meet Him there, His work done, in resurrection-life. He is found, after that, meeting with disciples only; not with Jews and Gentiles, but in the midst of the assembly or that which is the type of it. But He first meets with individual saints, Mary Magdalene and others. We find Him in the assembly on the first day of the week. And the Lord's day has this character to us now. It is first the day of Christ's resurrection, when not merely the work of redemption was done, but the work of new creation begun in mighty power. Thus the new day is founded, not upon creation, but upon redemption, and it is the expression of grace, not of law.

These are the Scriptural ways of putting the matter. Therefore is it to be maintained, not that the Christian man has got no special day in which he meets his Savior; for he has one incomparably more blessed than the sabbath of man. It is not that he has not got as good a day as the sabbath of Israel: he has an infinitely better one. He is not merely remembering a creation, which is passed away; but he has entered on a new creation. Not that he is occupied with a paradise that is lost; he looks onward confidently to that which is gained. The paradise of God is opened to him. It is not that he is following and occupied with Adam that fell; he has before his soul the Second man, the last Adam, that rose. These are our hopes. He is not, therefore, within the domain of the law that will curse him, but in the atmosphere of grace by which be is saved. This shows us why people, whether they understand the difference or not—all Christians—keep the first day and not the sabbath. They may call it the sabbath-day; but this is quite a mistake, and a grievous one. Those who view it as the sabbath may be most excellent persons, but the notion is seriously an error in doctrine and practice. It is an earthly, Jewish principle; and it is a Christian's duty, if he know better, not to spare it, however he may feel for the prejudices of the godly.

I have heard of believers who could say, There is no harm in working upon the Lord's day. Who put such a thought into their heads? Seeking gain upon the Lord's day! Why even the world shames those who do so. Christendom owns the Lord's day. They may not enter into it intelligently. It is impossible for them to appreciate its roots and fruit. But a Christian behaving more selfishly or loosely than a worldly man—what a picture! How is the Lord's day then to be kept? It is a remarkable fact that nowhere is it made into a commandment. This is not the character of Christianity. When the Lord (as in John) speaks about commandments, they are always of a spiritual nature, and not like an ordinance. Take even baptism. People may call it an ordinance, but it is a misconception. So as to the Lord's Supper. When the Lord says, “Do this in remembrance of me,” how lowering to call this a commandment! Supposing you were at the dying bed of one who loved you better than any one else in this world; if he said, Here is my Bible, take it and keep it in remembrance of me; would you call this a commandment? Would it be the reason for keeping the Bible that you had a peremptory injunction to keep it? Such a thought would show that there was no heart there, and very little head either. I can understand a person in authority, if a child lacked feeling and sense, laying down something as a positive charge, just because the child wanted heart to do the right thing, unless it were made a matter of stringent obligation and penalty.

But not so does the Lord speak to us. If you love the person who gives you the Bible to keep in remembrance of him, it is not as a mere commandment; but his heart gives you this token of his love to you, and your love keeps it, of course, and keeps it best because it is love that does it.

There are places where commandments come in most beautifully. Where in the New Testament do you hear of commandments most? In the gospels where the Lord's Supper, Christian baptism, or both, are shown out, commandments to the Christian are not, as such, mentioned. On the other hand, it is in the Gospel of John that we have the Spirit of God so full of the new commandments that the Lord lays upon us. These were the expressions of His mind. They brought in not His love only but His authority, which is blessed whenever it does come in, and the child of God loves and values both thoroughly. But if you bring in such thoughts into the Lord's Supper, what a complete misapprehension of the Lord's mind! It falsifies baptism and the Lord's Supper, to change them into things enjoined in the way of commandment. They are the most precious institutions of the Lord, the symbol and acknowledgment of the great standing facts of Christianity.

As to the Lord's day, I must again recall the remarkable manner in which it is introduced in the New Testament. There is no positive word such as, “The first day of the week thou shalt keep.” Wickedness thence infers that it is not to be kept. Some take advantage not to observe the day, because the Lord does not make it a matter of positive command. Another class take advantage of it in another form, and assume that it is the business of the Church to decide in such matters. One is human laxity, and the other the self-importance of man. The Lord's day comes before us as those that are quickened with Christ; stamped with His own special presence. Christ was, and I believe is, with His disciples in a manner peculiar to that day. I do not say that the Lord did not visit His disciples upon other days, but He was specially and pre-eminently with them gathered together on that day. This is enough for me. If I own the word of God as that which has supreme power over my soul, if I value every act of Christ as that from which I am to gather divine instruction, how can this be lost upon me? But the Holy Ghost follows it up. That day which our Lord consecrated with His own presence in the midst of His gathered saints, the Holy Ghost impresses upon His people. It is not brought out in the form of law or injunction or threat; but the Church of God, whatever other days they might meet on, took especial care to meet on this day. There was also a sweet connection between the Lord's Supper and His day. The earliest disciples took that supper every day; they seemed as if they could hardly part when they got together; and they came together as often as they could, and everything gave place to this. Not that I think that the Pentecostal state of things was the most maturely blessed. There was singular power of simplicity in them, and very wonderful manifestation of divine grace: but I have little doubt there were many souls that went on and grew and enjoyed the Lord more than they ever did on that day. It is an evil, unfounded notion, because the flesh constantly tends to draw the believer back from the first enjoyment of the Lord, to think that therefore it must be so. There is no necessity for declension at all. There is a kind of first fervor and freshness that is very apt to be lost in the soul; but if there is real integrity of heart to the Lord, positive growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ will follow. And although there may be a certain kind of joy that is not so great at the end of ten or twenty years as it was on the first day of coming to the knowledge of the Savior, yet I do not believe that it is therefore a wore spiritual state or more glorifying to God. One is the blessedness of an infant; the other of a full-grown soul, more firmly, calmly, unselfishly, it may be, honoring God in its way, provided the soul, along with increase of knowledge, maintains its singleness of heart to the Lord. That is where we fail: but as far as the power of the Spirit of God goes, there is no reason why a soul should not be as happy after fifty years as at the first.

In the course of the New Testament, I think you find this very thing; the Spirit of God taking up the first day and showing that it was not merely a hasty feeling of the disciples, but a truly godly one. The Spirit of God directed it when the apostles were there, and not only leads them on, but preserves the record of the fact for us. Therefore, in Acts 20:7, we have it recorded, that so it was after the Jerusalem-state, when they went up to the temple to worship and used to break bread at home. For let me say in passing, the margin is correct; it is in contrast with worshipping in the temple. They used to pray in the temple because they had been Jews, and they took their Christian feast at home. Now it may have been always the same houses where persons went. There is no such idea as moving about from house to house, but it was at home, i.e., in a private house and not in the temple. After this state of things was past away, we hear of assembling to break bread on the Lord's day, the first day of the week. And, when we think of it, there is peculiar force and blessedness in the first day of the week being the Christian day. What is the idea of the Sabbath-day? I take the first six days to myself, to the world, to earthly things, and then at the end of it, when I may be tired of serving myself and other people, I finish up with the Lord and give the last day to Him. But now how beautifully the Christian form of the truth comes in! It is the first day. I begin with the Savior. I begin with His grace. I begin with Him that died for me and rose again. I am not a Jew, I am a Christian, and therefore, let us not forget, it is the seventh day which is the Sabbath, for the one; but the first day, which is the Lord's day, for the other; the day of Him who by His own blood, death, and resurrection has acquired a just title for my eternal and heavenly blessing. He had it in His own person; He was Jehovah, the Lord of all, before ever He came into the world; but now He is Lord on another ground—that of redemption—because He has died and risen. There is at once the open door of my blessing—of your blessing—divine blessing to every poor soul that is brought by grace to receive Him and bow to Him.

We will not dwell farther upon this subject now. I have desired to convey with simplicity the general principle of these two sabbath-days. Instead of pursuing the subjects of the chapter for the present, it seemed better to bring out the divine character of the sabbath-day and the still more blessed and equally divine character of the first day; the one being the day for the Jew, the other for the Christian. The sabbath-day will re-appear on the earth in the millennium. I mean that the seventh day of the week will be then kept by the Jews. The prophecies are plain that the sabbath of the Lord is yet to be observed. But by whom? By Israel and by the Gentiles, too; for the Gentiles by and by will be subordinate to Israel, and both on earthly ground. God's intention is to exalt Israel to the first place on the earth. Meanwhile, what becomes of Christians? They will be taken out of the earth altogether; they will be in heaven; all question of particular days will be completely at an end; we shall be in the day of eternity, we shall have entered upon the rest of God, the sabbatism that remains. In spirit we have done so even now, because we have received Christ and eternal life in Christ. But then we shall be manifestly in the eternal day, when there will be neither first day nor last day, but one infinity in the glorified state, blessedly serving our God and the Lamb. But upon the earth, when Israel will be restored and brought back to their own land and converted by God's goodness there, will they observe the Lord's day? No; they will keep the Sabbath. If you look at Ezekiel, you will see the force of it exactly. You might be able from thence to form a map of Israel's condition in the land—it is given there so distinctly and positively, that a person might with little trouble lay down the landmarks of each tribe of Israel. Thus clear is the word of God as to the future disposition of each tribe within the borders of the Holy Land. They will have not only a glorious city and temple—the name of it, “The Lord is there;” but when that day of glory comes, they will not be as we are, keeping the day of resurrection, but the sabbath, which was a sign between the Lord and Israel. Looking at the Scriptures, you will find how often the sabbath-day is said to be Jehovah's sign to them;. and He will cause His people then to keep the sabbath-day. They will do so in a far more blessed way than ever they did; they will rest upon Christ, though they will not have the same heavenly assurance that the Christian has now. When Christ rose from the dead, He had done with the world; and we, too, in Him, have done with the world now in the spirit of our souls, and in the character of our

relationship to God. “They are not of the world.” How far? “Even as I am not of the world.” Christ is the measure and standard of how far we are not of the world; and not being of the world, we have a day that bears the stamp of joy upon it. The day that Christ rose from the dead and was manifested as not of the world, that is the day for the Christian. But inasmuch as the world will be made a blessed world then, and the Lord will make it His own world, they will have a day suited for the world, the sabbath-day. Nothing can be more plain or more important, practically.

May our souls, each of us for himself, learn the truth, and, having learned it, may we be witnesses of it in word and deed! May we stand forth by His grace as those who now have nothing to do in this world but the will of God, for the glory of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! That is the business of every soul that loves Jesus and rests upon His blood and is risen with Him.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 2:23-28, Remarks on

THE incident of the first Sabbath-day is here recorded, which, in point of fact, took place at this very time; for we must constantly bear in mind that Mark pursues the thread of history. Our Lord is intimating the break that was about to take place with Judaism and the introduction of the new character and power of the kingdom of God. Now this is a very serious truth always, but it was peculiarly solemn to Israel. What more perplexes a godly person than the very thought of God changing His mind? What difficulty greater than the notion that God could, as it were, unsay or undo what He had previously laid down? And I think there ought to be great delicacy in dealing with souls where we find there is a godly jealousy as to this, even though it may be ignorant, and not without prejudice. But still it was the evident fact, that what God set up for a specific purpose in Israel never fully reflected His own mind. Eternal truth, breaking through the clouds of Judaism, shone out in the person of Christ, and is now verified in experience as well as faith by the Spirit's working in the children of God.

In a word, it was never the purpose of God to reveal Himself and bring out all His mind. in connection with the Jews, but with the Church. Christianity and not Judaism is the expression of God's mind. Christ Himself, properly speaking, is the image of the invisible God; and Christianity is the practical present result. It is the application of the life, mind, and affections of Christ to the heart and walk of those who are brought to God; and this, founded on His work and correspondent to His place in heaven by the Spirit sent down. All through the Jewish system, as well as before it, there were souls waiting for Christ, and the only persona that ever honored God in the Jewish system were those who, by faith, were above that system. Those alone walked blameless in the various ordinances of the law who looked for the Messiah. It was this expectation, given by the Spirit of God, which lifted them above the earthly thoughts, the groveling desires, the selfishness of nature. It raised them above themselves, if one may so say, as well as above their fellows, for there is always divine power in Christ; and although it was far more fully displayed after Christ came, yet, (as one may see before the sun rises, there is such a thing as the dawn, and streaks that betoken the coming day) so those who looked by the faith of Christ beyond the mere passing shadows which met and satisfied the religiousness of nature—those only honored God even in the outward ordinances of Israel. It is the same principle now as ever, but in a fuller way; because nothing is more certain than that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the saint of God, in the Christian. But how is it fulfilled? Never merely by endeavoring to keep the law. It never was fulfilled in that way nor can be. In point of fact, as we know, the men that were thus jealous for the law were themselves the greatest and bitterest of the enemies of the Lord Jesus. You know it was fleshly pride as to the law which blinded them into the delusion, that even our blessed Lord Himself did not sufficiently honor it. We easily gather that Paul was taxed with the same reproach. And Stephen too was stoned to death because of this fertile and fatal mistake. So that we may lay it down as a fixed point, that the men who put the ordinances, or the outward regulations of God, in the place of God and Christ Himself, are men that never keep it; even as Stephen told the Jews that they received the law by the disposition of angels, and had not kept it. These were the men whose voices were loudest about it to those who really honored God in that law as well as in the faith of the Messiah.

Take every believer—I do not say on every occasion; for there is, sad to say, a danger of our own nature working, and that nature neither believes in Jesus nor keeps the law, but is a lawbreaking, Christ-denying thing: the flesh is enmity against God Himself, and nature working its own way always dishonors God. But take the believer—not when he is yielding to his own corrupt nature; take him where, in truth alone, so to speak, we can rightly think of a believer as such—in the exercise of his faith, in the manifestation of the new life which the grace of God has given him; and what is the character of this life? It cleaves to God, it delights in His word, it loves His will, it is attracted by whatever manifests Him. All proves that the believer loves God in heart and soul, loves Him better than himself, for he hates himself, and is ready to own, just so far as faith is in operation, his own folly, his frequent and shameful failure, while he seeks to justify and cleave to God, and delights to make Him known. How comes this? It is that divine principle of life, the energy of the Spirit of God, acting in the new man which enjoys each thing that flows from and displays God, and is the exercise of the new nature which we derive from God. Again, the believer, just in proportion as he has Christ before his soul, walks in the Spirit according to the will of God: if he has not Christ before him, it is as if he had no new nature; life is there, but it is only Christ that maintains, and manifests, and brings it out, giving its full exercise and scope. The believer's heart goes out towards misery, yea, towards poor guilty sinners. Flesh despises and hates, or is indifferent; but the new nature, under the Spirit's power, goes out in compassion and desire for another's blessing. There, I say, is love again; and thus you have the two great moral principles, love to God and love to man. The believer, and the believer alone, walks in them; if he has Christ in his eye, he has them in his heart, and the Holy Ghost strengthens him to walk accordingly. It is thus that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those that walk after the Spirit. The Spirit of God, is careful to show it is fulfilled in them that walk after the Spirit, not in such as only stand for the law.

Take the Jew, to whom the law was given; does he manifest real love? I do not say that some are not upright men, possessed of natural benevolence. The question now is of the manifestation of active love to God and man. If men have merely the law before them, what then? The Jew himself is the most striking example and proof that flesh is good for nothing; he is bent upon his own things in this world, coveting a place everywhere, loving money, and so on, of which we are all of us apt to be guilty by nature. Undoubtedly this is the case with the mere unconverted Israelite or the nominal Christian, in whom the Holy Ghost does not act. Unless Christ, either as an object of hope before He came, or now since He has come as the object of faith, be before the heart, there is no reality, nor can be, because the flesh is a false and hating thing. Unless a man have a new nature distinct from and above his own, there never is true (that is, divine) love. The one means of accomplishing the law is to have Christ before and above us, yet in that our portion by faith. Hence it was that Enoch and Noah, and the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who never heard of the law, yet obeyed and pleased God. Were they not holy and godly men? Certainly they were. What made them so? The faith of the woman's seed, the promised Son, the Messiah. Then, when the law was given, what was it that made Moses and Aaron saints of the Lord? The law? Never. It was Christ. It was having Him before their soul. Not that God's law was not

honored; but what enabled them to delight in the expression of God's mind—be it what it might—was their looking for and believing in God's blessed promise of the coming Deliverer, the Kinsman Redeemer. And now He is come, that which has delivered us from wrath and judgment, delivers us also, in proportion as it is the object of our souls, practically from self and the world, from corruption and violence of every kind. Let Christ be forgotten by a believer, what is the effect? He shows the pride, vanity, foolishness, malice of the old man; it is not of course, what is proper to him as a believer, but what belonged to him as a man before he believed. Self is allowed to come out and show its own hateful colors, when Christ is not the one standard and object who fills the mind's eye and heart.

Now our Lord, at this very time, brings out, in His pointed acts connected with the Sabbath-day, an illustration of what has been before us; and I take this opportunity of dwelling on it a little in a practical way and also doctrinally, seeking the instruction for our own souls that the Lord gives us in these incidents. It is true, that the first and primary object was to fill up what He had already shown. To put a new piece upon an old garment would only make the rent worse; so to pour new wine into old bottles would only risk the loss both of the wine and the bottles. The attempt to mix the new forms and spirit of the kingdom of God with the old ways of Judaism, would only end—not in mending Judaism nor in preserving Christianity, but—in the ruin of both. And this precisely has been the issue in the history of Christendom. The palpable failure of the outward Christian profession is the practical evidence of this truth. What Satan aimed at was to mingle together the old Jewish ordinances with Christian truth, and the result is such painful confusion that the light of truth and the grace of God are utterly darkened; such a complete jumbling together that simple souls are perplexed, to their exceeding loss and damage. They cannot in such a state see the difference between grace and law, and what it is to be brought under the name of Christ. All these things are dim before them; and hence ensues uncertainty of soul and powerlessness practically in glorifying God.

Our Lord follows this up by the instruction of the Sabbath-day. “It came to pass that he went through the corn-fields on the Sabbath-day, and his disciples began as they went to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath-day that which is not lawful?” Now it is clear that there was no law of God against the case. The censure was a law of their own, and a notion of men which looks upon an outward fact and made a system of it—man's constant danger. It is quite true that God had ordained upon the Sabbath-day rest for man and beast; but there was no ground whatever from the law of God to forbid a hungry man, as he passed through a field, from plucking the ears of corn to satisfy his want; nay, it was thoroughly according to the beneficence of God to provide from His people's plenty for such urgent need. There was remarkable care in Israel for the stranger, the bereaved, and the suffering. The poor in the land were not to be forgotten in the joy of harvest, and an express ordinance of God forbade their making clean riddance of the corners of the field. But how came it to pass that there should be famished Israelites thus passing through a corn-field? And if such want existed, was it God or His enemy who turned the Sabbath-day into an iron vice for afflicting the sad at the will of heartless religionists? Thus it was that the Pharisees in their pretended desire to honor God, on the one side, showed, on the other, their complete ignorance of His heart and character, which breathed the fullness of mercy towards want and wretchedness; all was set aside by the miserable codicil that man added to the will of God. But there was One on earth who at once detected the forger's hand that presumed to meddle with the first testament. The Lord stands up for the guiltless. “Have ye never read what David did, when he had need and was an hungered, he and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the show-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him?”

Our Lord here points to the rejection of the object of God's counsels—of David, for instance, in his day, who was the anointed king, even while he was the despised one and hunted for his life upon the mountains of Israel. He and his company typified Jesus; and Jesus was found now in circumstances morally similar to those of David, anointed but not yet come to the crown. Thus it is that the Lord vindicates the disciples and maintains the principle that when God's witness is refused, it is madness for the rejecters to pretend to be glorifying God. Were they then despising a greater than David? For such to talk about the Sabbath-day, in order to lay heavier burdens on the righteous, what was it in God's eyes? The Lord of glory was upon earth, and how came it that His disciples wanted even ears of corn to stay their hunger? What a tale this told! How was it that the disciples of Jesus were thus miserable? How out of course must be the foundations, for the Lord and His disciples to lack the most ordinary necessaries of life! Who were these graters of malicious words about the Sabbath-day that could forbid even this scanty pittance, while God's mercy would refuse to none, and least of all on that day? But that the Pharisees, rejecting the Lord Jesus, their own Messiah—that they should have the face to abuse the Sabbath against His disciples! David, when he was in destitution because of the wickedness of Saul, who held the throne in an evil way, David and his followers could eat the shewbread which was only, had things been in order, for the priests. If thus the hallowed bread became common, what was the past to the present? In the presence of the evil that despises God's beloved and faithful witnesses in the earth, the outward ordinances of the Lord lose their application for the time being. The sanctity of ritual disappears before the rejection of the Lord and His people.

“And he saith unto them, The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.” The Sabbath was not intended to be a means of increasing the sufferings of poor man. If God sanctified it after the creation and enacted it at the giving of the law, was it that God wanted to make His people miserable? On the contrary, not only in its higher character, and beside the thought of His rest, of which it is a type, the Sabbath was made for man. Pharisees might turn the Sabbath into an engine for torturing man, but, in God's mind, the Sabbath came in most mercifully. There were the days of labor which God Himself had known something of in figure, for there was a time when He had wrought and made the earth; and God Himself was pleased to rest on the Sabbath and to sanctify it. Then sin came in and God could no longer own it, and His word is silent. We read of the Sabbath no more until God takes up His people in delivering mercy, and gives them manna from heaven. Then the Sabbath-day becomes again a marked thing, and rest follows, the type of Jesus sent down from above. It disappears from the beginning of the first book of Scripture and re-appears in the second. God makes rest once more. He was giving to man in grace when He brought Israel out of Egypt. Of this the Sabbath was the appropriate sign. But Israel, understanding not the grace of God, accepted the conditions of His law. They took their stand upon their own righteousness when God gave them the ten commandments, and the consequence was that man under law failed miserably, dishonoring God, setting up calves of gold, bringing discredit, shame, and scandal upon the name of God throughout the whole world. This is no more than we have each done. The Israelites made this fatal mistake when they surrounded Mount Sinai. Instead of reminding God of His promise to Israel, instead of confessing that they could not be trusted and that it is only the mercy of God that enables any one to do His will, they, on the contrary, undertook boldly to earn the promised blessings by their own obedience. But they broke down increasingly till it came to the crisis of David's rejection in Israel. God showed where His heart was, as He loves to do at such a time. Granted that the shewbread was only for the priests; yet for them to keep their consecrated bread and let the anointed king starve would be strange homage to God and the king. And now the Son of David, the Lord of David, was there, and more rejected, more despised, than David himself.

The Lord, after He has thus drawn out of Scripture the true lesson for the day, brings out the general beneficent object of God in the Sabbath for all days. “The Sabbath was made for man.” The Pharisees thought and spoke as if man was made for the Sabbath, to be put under it thus; but the Sabbath was made for man's good and rest, raising his thoughts above the mere labor of his hands. But He brings in another principle; “The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” He connects that with the Sabbath being made for man, but breaks out into a greater truth: the person of Christ is above all ordinances. His glory, even as the rejected man, eclipses all the twinkling rites instituted by the Lord Himself. I have no hesitation in saying that the Lord who gave the law at Sinai, and He who afterward was born and lived a man upon the earth, was the same blessed divine person. He who always acted throughout the Old Testament in government, who came down and suffered and died upon the cross in grace—He now maintains, not merely that He is Lord of the Sabbath in virtue of being divine, but of being Son of man; and what is the importance of this? “Son of man” is the title of His rejection. “Son of man” is the name that He assumes when the Jews refused Him as the Messiah. You will find a remarkable proof of this in Matt. 16:13, and Luke 9:18, (the same fact recorded in the two different evangelists.) He forbids His disciples to say that He was “the Christ.” He leaves aside for a while the glory of His Messiahship: as such He had come and presented Himself to the Jews; but they would not have Him. Now He says, as it were, it is too late: I have given them ample proof—miracle, prophecy, My own ways and words; everything shows that I am the Messiah, but they will not have Me. It is not that proof is wanting, but their hearts are steeled against all evidences. They are the enemies of God, and proved to be such by refusing what God has fully vouchsafed. Now He takes another character altogether— “Son of man.” And what may well and deeply affect us is this, it is as Son of man that He suffers on the cross. “The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.” “The Christ” was a title in particular connection with Israel after the flesh. He was their Messiah. He belonged to no other nation. He was the promised King of the Jews. But the Jews would not have Him. Well, says the Lord, you cannot deny that I am Son of man. It is a lowly name; but, after all, the Son of man opens the way to His magnificent rights and glory over all mankind. The Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The Son of man takes the kingdom over all tribes, and nations, and tongues. What leads to it all? His rejection as Messiah. He suffers as Son of man first, because it is determined, according to God's counsels and grace, to have companions with Him in the very same glory. It is through that very same fact that Christ has suffered as the Son of man, and has surely taken His glory because of it, that we shall be with Him—that all Christians will be without a spot or stain, or any such thing: all through the suffering Son of man. But if I have Him humbled, I have the glorious Son of man.

In the present case, however, the Lord does not go further than the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath. He accepts His rejection, but He pleads for His disciples before those who boasted and disputed about the Sabbath, while they were dishonoring the Lord of the Sabbath. Could they deny what David had done, and God had sealed, sanctioned, and recorded for Israel's instruction? That is the first defense. The next is that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for it. The third plea, which is rather a consequence, is, that He who was a blessed man, the Son of man, is Lord of the Sabbath. It is the glory of His person as the rejected, suffering Man: as such, and not only as God, He is above the Sabbath day—its Lord.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 2:1-23, Remarks on

WE have seen the Lord formally introduced and entering on His public gospel ministry, endowed with the power of the Spirit and tempted in vain though to the uttermost by the devil. We have seen Him, after calling chosen witnesses, expose and expel the unclean spirit which possessed a man. There was the power of God, no less than the authority of the Word. Extreme violent sickness fled and strength was ministered—strength to minister—at His hand: diseases and demons alike yielded to this minister of good in an evil day, who sought not their testimony but the face of His Father, in secret, while men slept. But if preaching the gospel and driving out devils was His main service, His compassionate heart and hand were open to every cry of need, as the leper proved who came in the abject confession of his misery, whose healing He subjects rigorously to the Levitical law of cleansing and thus compels the priests themselves to behold, in this very subjection to the law, the evidence of the presence and power of One who was above it.

After an interval spent in desert places with such as flocked to Him by the fame which kept Him from any city, we find our Lord once more in Capernaum; and at once crowds besiege, not the house only, but the very door, to hear the word He was speaking. (Ver. 1, 2.) Alas! Capernaum, wert thou not exalted to heaven? Art thou not brought down to hell? The mighty works done in thee were less mighty than the Word which thus attracted thee, as a very lovely voice of one that had a pleasant voice and could play well on an instrument; and yet all fell on heedless hearts and unploughed consciences; and they knew not, though they did know and will yet, that a prophet, and more than a prophet, was among them. But if the mass listened only with their ears, there was faith which persevered in face of difficulties, and failed not to make its suit to Jesus. What could seem more desperate? The leper at least could come to Him, could beseech, could kneel down to Him; how could the paralytic pierce the throng which severed him from the Savior? If he could not come himself, he could be brought. And so it was. They come bringing the paralytic on his bed, or couch, which was borne of four. “And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was; and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.” (Ver. 4.) O Lord, how sweet, how refreshing to Thy heart this confidence in Thee, this most eloquent, even if unuttered, appeal to Thy love and power! It was faith, not alone of the patient, but of his bearers; and faith, now as ever, gets not only what it asks, but far more and better. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” (Ver. 5.)

Yes! this was the root of the evil, deeper than either leprosy or paralysis—sin—which man accounts so small a matter, a mere moral scar on the surface!

What was sin not to Him who on the cross was made sin? who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? Filled with love, and in view of the faith which has there sought Him out, He acts in the sovereignty of grace and pronounces the wondrous words, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” He who knew all men, and did not commit Himself to them; He who knew God and His handiwork, commits Himself to faith. It may be weak faith, but it is of God; and His eye was quick to see it and to bless it according to all the love of His heart. “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

But Satan, too, had his congregation there. “There were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?” They were wise in their own conceits, they were judges of law and gospel, and neither doers of the one, nor believers of the other. They were worse. Rejecters of Christ and His mercy, their proud reason disdained the blessed truth of God; their proud self-righteousness spurned and hated that grace of which they never knew the need. The amplest evidence

of holy power, the power of God, in opposition to Satan and in compassion to man, had been vouchsafed; but what of that to reasoning scribes, used to the world as it is, and jealous of their own religious importance? One here below pronouncing the forgiveness of sins to a miserable sinner who had not even sought it! This was in their eyes startling, blasphemous, an encroachment on God's prerogative. Not that they cared for God or loved man, but they hated Jesus for His grace; and if it were the truth, their occupation was gone. But no, it could not be; it was unheard of since the world began: “Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?” Ah! there was the secret; the glory of Jesus was unknown, His divine dignity entirely left out of the account. The principle they urged was true, the application fatally false. How often this is the rock on which religious unbelievers split and perish!

And yet forthwith (ver. 8, 9) He gave them evidence of what and who He was; for He perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned in their hearts, taxed them with their hidden thoughts, and appealed to themselves whether it was easier by a word to convey forgiveness or a bodily cure. Which claim was readiest? Who but a divine person, or the wielder of divine power, could say either the one or the other? They were equally easy to God, alike impossible to man. “But that ye may know,” says He, (in evident reference to Psa. 103:3) “that the Son of man hath power (, the right as well as the ability) on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy) Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately be arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.” (Ver. 10-12.) The outward sign of power guaranteed the gift of grace; and both betokened that He who spoke was the Son of man on earth.

It will be observed that, though the Lord does here appropriate to Himself the double character of mercy, which Israel are yet to attribute to Jehovah in Psa. 103, it is not as Christ or Messiah, properly speaking, but as “Son of man.” So He was ever wont to speak. It is the title of His manhood, both in suffering rejection and in glory; as such He blesses faith here, as such He will judge unbelief by and by. (John 5) Thus He vindicated on earth, by the powers of the world to come, that mercy which forgave the sinful soul before them. What a withering rebuke to caviling scribes! What a triumphant testimony to the gospel of grace in the name of Jesus! And God does not now leave Himself without a witness, where His Spirit carries to the heart the power of that name; and a witness that fails not to tell on the consciences where there are eyes to see the holy strength and liberty of one previously degraded in sin, and shame, and folly. Sin withers the man, as well as covers him with guilt. He who pardons, communicates life and power, to the glory of God; and this as Son of man, the name of mercy to the ruined that bow to Him.

The next scene, after the record of His teaching by the seaside, (ver. 13,) still more opens and manifests the outflowing of grace: the call of Levi, the publican (or Matthew, as he calls himself). What a step and change! From the receipt of custom to follow Jesus, soon to be an apostle when the twelve were ordained! (Mark 3) No trade, no name was more scandalous in Israel. This was the very occasion for grace, as our Lord proves by His choice. Nor was this all, for as Jesus sat at meat in his house, “many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples; for they were many, and they followed him.” In Pharisaic eyes He could not have gone lower in familiar love, unless He had turned outright to the Gentiles; for shepherds were not more an abomination to the Egyptians, than publicans were to the scribes and Pharisees. Hence, when they saw Him eat with these reprobates, they say, not to Jesus but to His disciples, (for only pride and mischief were in their hearts,) “How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?” But this effort to undermine Him with His followers and so to shake them, only draws out from the Lord His own strong, increasingly strong, expression of grace, as well as His exposure of His and their enemies' self-destructive pride: “When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners.” (Ver. 17.) On their own showing what claim had they on all He had to bestow?

Next, a similar spirit of dishonesty and ill-will, which entangles the disciples of John also, goes to Jesus about His disciples; (ver. 18;) for they and the Pharisees, who used to fast, came to Him asking why His disciples did not. But the Master stands up in their behalf and shows that a wisdom above their own led them in their weakness. Where was the sense, the propriety, the reverence in fasting if the Bridegroom was there? John Baptist had announced better things; but Pharisaism despises Jesus and had no heart for the joys of His presence. Let them all learn, however, that the days were coming when He should be taken away, and then should they fast.

In truth, the whole scene intimated to those who had ears to hear the grave economical change that was at hand, and that Messiah's presence now was but transitional. His call of Levi and His eating and drinking with publicans, were no dark signs that Israel as such wore lost; the disciples' enjoyment of His brief stay before His taking away, plainly signified the abrupt and impending catastrophe—seemingly His, but really theirs; and the verses that follow (21, 22) bear witness to the new character of God's ways therein and to their incompatibility with Judaism. Neither its displayed form, nor its inner power can blend with the old thing: the kingdom of God being not in word but in power, must have a new and suited vehicle wherein to work. Legal forms only prove their weakness if there be the energy of the Holy Ghost. The worn-out Jewish garment and old bottles disappear: new wine demands new bottles. Christianity, in its principle and its practice, is a fresh and full development of divine blessing. It was not a question of mending the old, but accepting the new.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 1:40-45, Remarks on

Before we speak of the cleansing of the leper, let us consider a little the structure of our Gospel as compared with the others. A close inspection will soon satisfy the reader that Mark follows the order of the facts, as does John, with a very slight exception, so far as he gives us an historical account. Neither Luke nor Matthew adhere to the obvious successional, order of events: the former, with a view to developing the moral bearings of the facts, recorded the real condition of man and the admirable resources of divine grace; the latter, so as to manifest more vividly the change of dispensation consequent on the rejection of the Messiah. This, I believe, to have been the aim of the Holy Spirit in their Gospels respectively, without pretending to say how far the authors may have entered into the far-reaching purposes of God in their own inspired writings. In general, the character of the New Testament inspiration is intelligent communion with the mind of God, and not an instrumental medium only, as was the case ordinarily with the Jewish prophets. (1 Peter 1) The great question, however, is as to God's intention; and He looked to the permanent instruction and blessing of His Church through the written word.

Difference there is, frequent and grave, between the various presentations of the Lord in the Gospels; and this both in the order of the narratives and in the manner in which the separate circumstances and discourses are brought before us. To what are we to attribute these constantly varying shades? Is it to the mere infirmity of good men, who did as well no they could, but could not be expected absolutely to

tally, as even the best and ablest will disagree in their thoughts, feelings, apprehensions, and judgments? Or, on the contrary, are we to attribute these seeming discrepancies not to man's weakness but to God's wisdom? And are we reverently to ponder their every divergence from one another, as no less fraught with truth than their evident unisons? Not that we would for a moment forget that in the books of Scripture we have the beautiful maintenance of the individual style and manner of the writers. But let us all and always remember, that individuality sustained is a very distinct thing from error allowed, and that divine inspiration neither admits error nor destroys individuality.

That there are numerous and striking differences in the Gospels is plain to all but the most careless reader; that these differences are divinely given, and not the flaws of oversight, is equally certain to the believer. To confess the inspiration of the evangelists, and withal to attribute to the Gospels mistake of any kind, is to deceive oneself as well as sin against God. Inspiration is no more inspiration if it be compatible with error. To account for the shades of difference, to show how necessary, and reasonable, and divinely perfect they all are, is another matter, and depends on our measure of spiritual understanding and power; but no Christian ought to hesitate for an instant as to resenting every impeachment of the word of God. Now God has taken care that of the writers of the Gospels, two (Matthew and John) should be apostles, and two (Mark and Luke) not, though all, of course, are alike inspired. Further, His wisdom has arranged that, of these two classes, one of each (Mark and John) should adhere to chronological order, and the others (Matthew and Luke) should adopt, to a certain extent, a grouping of facts necessarily different from the simple transcription of the facts as they occurred. It is remarkable that to our evangelist, though not an apostle, we are indebted for the clearest view of the historical line of our Savior's ministry, followed by that which closed and crowned it, from the cross to the ascension. The proofs that Mark, in his brief, rapid, but most graphic sketch, preserves the series intact, will appear from time to time as we pursue its course. The fact is stated here, the importance of which, if accepted as true, is manifest; for we thus have a standard of sequence whereby we can measure, as on an absolutely perfect scale, the displacements of Matthew and Luke. We have, then, to consider in detail the principle and objects which the Holy Ghost had in view when He led these evangelists to gather together certain incidents, miracles, or discourses, taken out of their place, but according to an order quite as real as that of Mark, and, of course, still more proper for their own specific design.

The omission or insertion of particular points in one or more Gospels, not in the rest, is due to the same cause. For example, the first dawning of the true light on the hearts of Andrew, John, Peter, &c., is given nowhere but in John 1. “He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.” On the other hand, not John but the other evangelists show us their official summons to follow Christ and become fishers of men; but of these Luke only (chap. 5) furnishes, and this out of its actual date, the details of the miraculous draft of fishes which the Lord caused to act with such searching power on the soul of Peter, as well as on his partners. Otherwise, the succession of events in Luke coalesces with that of Mark, save that the former alone opens with the scene in the synagogue at Nazareth, (Luke 4:16-27,) which so livingly portrayed the intervention of divine goodness, Jesus anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; and, on His rejection by His own people, the overflowing of grace to the Gentiles. Matthew here (chap. 4:23-25) has no details, but dwells on His preaching and miracles throughout all Galilee, and its wide-spread fame and effects; after which broad outline follows the Sermon on the Mount, transplanted from its place as to date, so as to give at the outset a fuller exposition of the principles of the kingdom. Mark has not the Sermon; his task was not to unfold the character of the kingdom of heaven in contradistinction to the law, (as the prophet like unto and greater than Moses does in Matthew,) but to recount the works and gospel-ministry of the Lord; its place, if it had been inserted there, would have been, I believe, in the middle of chapter 3. Thus, the comparison of the chronological line of things in Mark, as being, so to speak, a fixed scale, greatly facilitates our perception of the displacements in Matthew or Luke, and our consideration of the divine wisdom which, in either case, so ordered their accounts.

To return, “There came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” What a picture of helpless misery this leper kneeling before Jesus! not therefore without hope, for he besought the Savior in his deep distress. There was no cure for leprosy; if God cured, there were offerings for cleansing. “Am I God to kill and make alive,” said the alarmed king of Israel, “that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?” In truth, to be a leper was to be “as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when be cometh out of his mother's womb.” (Num. 12:12.) Yet was this leper importunate with Jesus, of whose power he had no doubt. “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” This was the only question in a heart broken down to feel his real condition, his urgent and extreme need. Was Jesus willing? And what an answer came to feeble faith! For God will be God evermore, and surpass even our truest thoughts of Himself. “And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.” What new thing was this on earth! A man most surely, yet, as surely, infinitely more than man; a heart touched with exquisite feelings of pity; a hand stretched to touch a leper! Was this law? Had it been only law, and a mere man in question, there would have been not the cleansing of the unclean, but the defilement of him who ventured into contact with that loathsome, forbidden object. But descend ever so low as He might in grace, Jesus was the Son of God, a divine person, who alone of all men could sinlessly say, “I will; be thou clean.” No exertion of power could have so met the leper's wants, his wants of soul as well as of body. The tenderness, the perfect, unselfish love that touched him—what should not this be to our hearts? Assuredly, it revealed the heart of Jesus, as no words alone could have done; and yet the words revealed One who was God on earth. It was divine grace in man, in Jesus, the perfect servant of God, and the more blessedly serving man's necessities, because thus perfectly serving God. Hence, immediate cleansing followed, the very reverse of contamination contracted. “And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.”

“And He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man,” &c. It was of importance that the priest, at the sight of the leper cleansed, should be compelled to own and witness and, as it were, formally take cognizance of the proof that the hand of God was there at work, not now writing judgment on the proud profanity of man, but in the might, and withal deepest condescension, of grace, working the cure of abject and otherwise hopeless wretchedness and suffering, the standing type of a sinner. Besides, grace respects and maintains law till death and resurrection brought in another, and surpassing, and abiding glory for those who have their portion in it by faith; neither does it seek its own credit, but that God in all things should be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

“But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to Him from every quarter.” Jesus sought not His own things; and just, as in the previous scene, (ver. 37,) human applause was but the occasion of His turning away from the éclat of miracles to other and more despised work; so here He avoids town for neglected wilds, though ever open to the appeal of need, come whence it may.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 1:14-39, Remarks on

We have seen thus far in Christ the great preparations for the service of God, the first of them, at least and of course, modified by His intrinsic and absolute sinlessness. And such, I believe, to be, in measure, true of every one whom the Lord calls to follow in His own path. There is, first, the owning of our true place before God. And what real enjoyment of our spiritual relationship can there be, till we bow before God in the truth of our condition? There maybe a sort of joy arising from the thought of sins being forgiven; but forgiveness of sins, however sweet and important, is, after all, but an act—an immense, divine act—of sovereign grace through the blood shedding of the Savior. It is not in itself the existence or the enjoyment of our new definite relationship of sons with the Father. This, along with the seal of the Spirit, is what is next given. We, too, led by the Spirit, have the happy witness that we are the children of God. But, following this, there must be the consciousness of what the power of Satan is, and of the wilderness, too, before there can be the full ability to serve others in the power of God.

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” This was the fitting moment for his public ministry. It was an hour little suited for nature, when Messiah's forerunner was tasting the enmity of the world; but Jesus came not to escape the sorrows of love in a hating world, but to make known what God is, in spite of, yea, because of, such a world. Therefore He says, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” There was no more delay for the testimony of grace. It was no question of the law, but of repentance and believing in the Gospel. But though it was now the time for divine action, grace will have sharers of its own joy. Accordingly we have Simon and Andrew, James and John called to become fishers of men. (Ver. 16-20.) They had known and believed in Jesus before, but now they must follow and be with Him. Boats, nets, father—their earthly property, their ordinary occupation, their natural relationship—must yield to the call of Jesus. Not that all are called to go after Jesus thus; but assuredly it is the Holy Ghost who leads the soul that is born again to call Him Lord: Is this confession to be real or is it unmeaning? By His blood we are redeemed to God, We are not our own; we are bought with a price. He is our Lord; not only in great things, but in the smallest matters of everyday life. And sure I am that a crisis comes in the history of believing souls, when they must be put to the proof how far this is true in their experience. For Satan does seek to tempt us; out of the happy place of the servants of Christ, to make ourselves lords, as it were. Are we seeking our own interests, our own pleasure, our own ease? Are we struggling for our own will? Are we seeking to be something in the world, or, at any rate, something in the Church? What is this but to be lords instead of His servants? But to own Him as Lord, to do His will, this is our own proper business. For this we are saved. This is what He died for; and this is what we ought to live for—to own Jesus Lord. To live for ourselves in anything, is to defraud Him of His rights; and it is to deny, so far, the great price He paid to make us His.

“And they went into Capernaum, and straightway on the Sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.” This is the first and essential point in the ministration of God's word, that it should be spoken with authority. Flesh may imitate it. The world thinks that self-will is the only thing that can avail to effect any end. But however strong man's will may seem in the things of men, the certainty of God's will is the one thing by which the Holy Spirit clothes the word with authority in divine things. This was pre-eminently the case with Christ, for He alone as man had the Lord always before Him. But even with us there should be the speaking with assurance of God's mind and will, (1 Peter 4,) if we speak for God at all; otherwise it would be better to be silent. With the scribes it is not so. They may reason or they may dazzle, as argument or fancy preponderates. But for us, it is better not to speak if we have not the certainty of that which God would have spoken at any given time. By speaking uncertainly, we only communicate our own doubts or darkness to others. But if we have by grace the certainty of God's truth, let it be spoken with authority. It is as servant that Christ does so here. He was Himself the perfection of humility; for it is in no way inconsistent with a lowly mind, to speak with the fullest authority where we have no doubt about the mind of God.

But next we find “there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out saying, Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy. One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.” How strikingly these demoniacal possessions appeared in the presence of Jesus! One might almost think, as we read the gospels, that all then, existing and possible cases had been crowded around, Him. But the truth is, there may have been as many before, but the presence of divine light brought it all out then; the presence of Jesus, the Son of God, drove Satan to bay, and withdrew the mask which may previously have covered his victims. And in a degree this may be observed wherever the power of God's truth and holiness are at work. Does He raise a standard? Their opposition will at once be felt, and the enemy will declare himself. The unclean spirit would gladly be left alone, but owns the power of the despised Jesus of Nazareth. The power of Satan could but feel the presence and supremacy of the despised of men, but Holy One of God. Jesus, however, rebukes him, and delivers the possessed to the astonishment of all who own the new doctrine by reason of the power which judged and expelled the enemy.

Nor is this all. The divine word was felt, and demons were forced out. Sickness, too, flees before His touch; and this not only in the individual case of Simon's wife's mother, but in crowds of others, miserable and distressed in every form. As to this, indeed, we have but to humble ourselves before God; for the Church was once the seat of this same wondrous energy of rebuking diseases and casting out devils. They were the powers of the world to come. But God has stripped the Church of her ornaments to our shame; and it becomes us to be humbled for it. Let us, however, turn to Jesus. Unwearied with His day of toil and service for others, at even it was still the same. He evermore carries on His work of love; for “when the sun was set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils, and all the city was gathered together at the door, and he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils, and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.” He refused that mixed testimony. It must be divine, in order to be accepted of Him. But what is so blessed for us and so instructive too, is the next lovely feature that we find in the Lord as the servant on earth. “In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” Occupied though He had been, early and late, with the sorrows of others, yet here we find Him long preventing the dawn, while it was yet the dark of night, in order to bold intercourse with His Father. And what were the communications between such a Father and such a Son! The Old Testament tells us, “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.” The New Testament tells us how He went a great while before day into a solitary place, and there He prayed. And if He thus retired to be with God, Himself the Lord God, before He entered upon the work of the day, can we wonder that we fail so much in outward labor, who fail yet more in this inward intimacy with our Father? Be assured, the secret of holy strength and endurance in service is found there alone.

Mark gives us the ministry of the Lord. His account is brief; and there are few events which are not recorded by Matthew and Luke. Nevertheless, what a gap there would be in our view of the Savior's life and work here below, if we had not Mark! In none have we a more characteristic manner of presenting what is given us. In none have we such graphic, vivid life-touches of our Master: not only what He said and did, but how He looked and felt. Besides, there is the evident design of drawing our attention to His gospel-service; and all the incidents chosen, and the peculiar mode in which they are handled, will be found to bear upon this weighty and affecting theme: the Lord God as the servant, in lowly, faithful ministration of the gospel here below.

The very opening illustrates this. “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God: as it is written in the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying,” &c. We at once enter on the great business the Holy Ghost had in hand. There is no blowing of trumpets to usher in the king in due style and title. This has its just place in Matthew, where the descent traced from Abraham and David, along the chosen royal line of Solomon too, so admirably agree with God's object there. And the circumstances before and after His birth follow, all carrying out the same end of presenting Jesus as the true and blessed Messiah of Israel. Luke and John, it could be readily shown, were endowed by the Spirit with equally striking and suited wisdom for maintaining the aim of their gospels respectively; but space forbids, for the present, our delaying to speak of these things particularly.

It is well, however, in noting the beautiful immediateness of the picture here brought before our eyes, to observe that there is no precipitancy, no omission of what was a most important preface for the account of Jesus thus ministering—the previous appearance and services of John the Baptist. To this there seems to be an allusion in the opening words. It was more than prophecy, though in accordance, as verses 2 and 3 prove, with the prophets. “The law and the prophets,” we are told elsewhere, “were until John,” who took a great step in advance— “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Such was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, after long silence had reigned as to God's testimony in Jerusalem.

Further, is it not touching to see that, if we are about to follow the steps of God's faithful and only perfect servant, the change which the Holy Ghost, in sovereign wisdom, makes in His citation (ver. 2) of Mal. 3:1, attests the divine glory of Jesus? In the prophecy it is Jehovah sending His messenger who would prepare the way before Him. In the evangelist it is still Jehovah sending His messenger, but it is now before “thy face,” i.e. the face of Jesus Christ. The truth is, Jesus, humble Himself as He might, was Jehovah. Matthew elicits the same truth from His name. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.” Now the Jews were the people of none but Jehovah. It is the more remarkable in the opening of our gospel; for Mark, unlike Matthew, rarely quotes the Scriptures. How perfectly it is in keeping with the gospel, and its opening part also, is evident. If the Lord of glory was coming or comes in the form of a servant and the likeness of men, it was most appropriate that prophecy should (not be broken but) bend before Him, and that a new and still more blessed testimony should begin.

But where cries this voice of the herald, and where was he baptizing? “In the wilderness.” What, then, was the state of Jerusalem and the people of God? They must go outside to John if they would take their right place before God. What be presented was the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The effect was great; I say not savingly, but extensive, and not without touching the conscience. “There went to him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.” All this is here sketched by Mark, clearly but rapidly and in brief, without stopping by the way to set before us, as was needful to the purpose of God in Matthew, the proud and false-hearted men who stood in the place of religious leaders of the day, objects of God's certain and scrutinizing judgment.

But if John had his own special place, and if his abode, and garb, and food, (ver. 6,) witnessed his separation from the evil state of Israel, it was his happier task to testify the superiority of Christ's person, and of His ministry, as compared with his own (ver. 7, 8). Nothing is here said of baptizing with fire, as in Matthew and Luke, to both of whose subjects it was requisite. But Mark was inspired to speak only of that part of John's testimony which is directly associated with the Lord's gospel work, namely, baptizing with the Holy Ghost. It is not, of course, that, under Christ repentance ceased, and can ever but be in a world of sin, the necessary pathway of a soul that is born of God. Still, the turning of a soul to God, in a sense of sin and self-judgment, is different from the divine power which sets evil aside on the basis of a redemption accomplished by the grace of God. This is the characteristic blessing of Christianity.

Yet was Jesus, the baptizer with the Holy Ghost, Himself baptized by John in the Jordan (ver. 9), Himself receives the Holy Ghost! What a sight and truth! Infinitely above sin and sins, (which He did not even know,) yet was He baptized with water: He had no unrighteousness to confess, but thus it became Him to fulfill all righteousness. From Nazareth of Galilee came He, who was God over all, blessed forever. There He dwelt, as Matthew tells us, so that the prophets' saying might be in this, as in all else, fulfilled. Could heaven behold unmoved such grace? Impossible. “And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened [cleaving asunder], and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him.” What meaning had that act of baptism in the mind of God! “And there came a voice from heaven saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” “Him,” as John says, “hath God the Father sealed.” It is not merely the fact, but “He saw,” &o., which is here recorded. Though truly God, He was man; though a Son, He became a servant, and was now about to enter on His ministry. He receives the Spirit as well as the recognition of His Sonship. He had justified God's sentence on, and call to, Israel; yea, He had in grace joined the souls who had bowed to it in the waters of Jordan; but this could not be without the answer of the Father for His heart's joy in the path He was about to tread. The one was the fulfillment of every kind of righteousness and not legal only (this in grace, for there was no necessity of evil in His case); the other was His recognition thereon by the Father in the nearest personal relationship, over which His submission to baptism might have cast a cloud to carnal eyes.

“And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness; and He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him.” (Ver. 12, 13.) What a picture of His position in a few words of God! Moses, the lawgiver, had been with God on the mount forty days; Elijah, the prophet, had been in the wilderness with God for the same, sustained without the need of man's food. But what was either miracle compared with the position of Jesus? For Him the Son, to be with God was, and had been from all eternity, His natural place, so to speak; but now He was come down to the earth, a man among men; and in the wilderness, to which sin had

reduced this fair creation, He is for forty days tempted of Satan. Man was not there; but the wild beasts were, as our evangelist so forcibly adds; and there too the angels were ministering to Him. It was all His wondrous preparation for a service no less wondrous.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Unclean Demon Cast Out

Mark 1:23-28; Luke 4:33-36

This miracle which Mark records as well as Luke may be noticed as the first wrought publicly on one a demoniac. Indeed it has a striking place in the opening of our Lord's service in the second Gospel, which is devoted to that display of its exercise. What truths are more needful for man to hear than that he is in one way or another under the thraldom of Satan? and that the name of Jesus alone avails to deliver him? Only it is as beautiful as it is blessed to see that the third Gospel depicts from the vision of Isaiah the grace and power in which He came, before manifesting man's wretched subjection to the enemy. It was given to Luke only to tell us of that matchless scene in the synagogue at Nazareth, before the solemn lesson that soon followed at Capernaum. How quickly men turn from wonder at grace in God and His Son to the wrath and hatred of their own offended pride I How slow to allow that their own will opens the door for their slavery to Satan!

"And there was in the synagogue a man having a spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried with a loud voice, Eh I what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Didst thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out from him. And the demon, having thrown him down in the midst, came out from him, without injuring him. And amazement came upon all, and they spoke together one with another, saying, What [is] this word? because with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out " (vers. 33-36).

No doubt this case like others in the Gospels exhibits the aggravated fact of possession. It was not derangement here, but Satan's command of mind and body. Yet it is also observable that what is ordinary and presents none of the humiliating horrors of possession may be really more ruinous eternally. So we may infer from the Gadarenes, who were not drawn to Jesus by the deliverance of him that had the legion, but on the contrary besought Him to depart from their borders. In any way, how awful is the subjection! How gladly should men hail the true tidings God sends of a Deliverer in Jesus I Only believe on Him; believe God about His Son. Do you not need Him desperately? None less, none other, than Jesus can defeat Satan or save your soul.

Think of the fearful identification of the unclean spirit with the man, which his language reveals. " Eh I what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Didst Thou come to destroy us? " There is no creature in the universe which affords a lair so congenial for a demon as a sinful human heart. As long as you are far from the Lord, you are near and open to the power or wiles of the spirit of evil. He is your great enemy; the Lord Jesus is your greater friend. Reject not the Savior to your ruin. Be assured that He will receive you; if you cast your soul on Him, He will in no wise reject you. He came to seek and save the lost. If you own yourself lost, as indeed you are, He is just the Savior for you.

There is another notable word. " I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Yes, He was and is " holy," even as God is, the Holy One of Israel. And this most appalls these unclean spirits, a Man, yet the Holy One of God No wonder that they believe and shudder. How portentous that sinful man when he hears neither believes nor shudders! yea, yet worse, that he believes after a sort without a shudder even at his own state and sure doom, if he abides as he is in his sins, neglecting so great salvation.

But " Jesus rebuked him," refusing a demon's testimony; as the apostle did at a later day. God testifies by His word, as He was then testifying in Jesus, His Son and Servant; and the Holy Spirit is now sent forth to bear witness of Jesus, that you may believe on Him and be saved.

Not content with rebuking the demon, He commanded him to hold his peace and come out from the man he had made his prey. And the demon was compelled to obey. If he threw the man in the midst, as evidence of the powerful spirit, he came out from the man without doing him hurt, to the praise of the Lord Jesus. It was not " word " only, to which they were used; but this word was with authority and power in Jehovah's servant, His chosen. Amazement came on all then; but for a sinner to believe is far better still.

Oh! is not this the Savior that you want? He that died to annul him that had the power of death, He died for you, that your sins might be blotted out and yourself justified by faith in His name. " For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Such was the due time with God: why is it not your due time 2 What could God do more to meet your danger and your need? How could He better assure you of His deep compassion? No other sign could match what He has already given in the Crucified? Why should you ask or look for any other? Be sure God gave the very best.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 15:27-47, Remarks on

Mark, like Matthew, mentions the thieves (indeed all do) as a testimony to the complete humiliation of God's servant and Son on the cross. Men would not even give Him that place singularly. He was indeed alone in the grace and moral glory of the cross; but to increase the shame of it these two thieves were crucified with Him, one on His right hand and the other on His left. “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, “And he was numbered with the transgressors."1 Such was its outward appearance; but next, also, His words were turned against Him, not merely on His trial but in His dying moments. “And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross.” How little did they know that His very words were now on the point of being completely accomplished!

But the chief priests carried it out farther, as usual. Mocking, they “said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.” A great truth, though not in the sense in which they meant it. Both its parts, rightly applied, are most true; of course not that He could not, but that He did not save Himself—yea, could not, if grace were to triumph in redemption. “He saved others; himself he cannot save.” It is the history of Christ upon earth; it is the history above all of His cross, where the whole truth of Christ comes out more fully though under the absolute infliction of divine wrath for our sins as well as the greatest strain of outward circumstances, but all borne in perfection.

The holiness of Christ that at all cost would put away sin to the glory of God, the love of Christ that at all cost to Himself would bring eternal deliverance to others, the grace of God, was fully seen in Him; the righteous judgment, the truth, and the majesty of God. There was nothing that did not stand vindicated on the cross as nowhere else. It was the resurrection, however, that displayed all, publishing what God felt. He was raised from the dead, as it is said, by the glory of the Father. What was done upon the cross was for others; but what was towards Himself, as well as towards others, appeared in the resurrection and setting of Jesus at God's right hand. But in the mouth of unbelief, the very same expressions bear a totally different character from what they have in the lips of faith. So it is that a worldly man may show that appearance of calm in the presence of death which faith really gives him whose eye is on Jesus: in this one it is peace, in that no better than insensibility. But with ordinary believers, who do not understand the fullness of grace, there are mental anxieties beyond what the unbeliever knows, because the latter does not feel what sin is and what becomes the glory of God. When a soul believes and yet is not established in grace, it is in trial and trepidation of spirit as to the result; and it ought to be so till the heart is at rest through Christ Jesus.

How little these chief priests knew the secret of grace! He saved others, said they, and they could not but know it. Himself He would not—did not—save. Nay, in the sense of love and divine counsel, Himself He could not save. He laid down His life for us: no other wise could we be saved; and more than this, obedient to the Father at all cost, determined to carry out His will, even our sanctification. In that sense only He could not save Himself. There was no necessity of death in the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. All other men had the necessity of death through Adam; Christ had not, though He, the last Adam, Christ, sprang from him through His mother; He did not in Himself underlie the consequences of the first Adam at all, though He in grace bore all the consequences on the cross, but not as one under them; He only bore them for others by God's will and in His own sovereign love. Therefore very expressly, as to His death, He says, “I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again.” He alone of all men could. say so since the world began. Adam in Paradise could not speak thus; Christ alone had the title according to the rights of His person. His becoming man did not compromise His divine glory. His being God did not enfeeble His suffering as man. There was no lowering of deity; but, in result, a very real exalting of humanity. Nevertheless the Scriptures must be fulfilled: the Anointed One must die—God's glory must be vindicated—death must be encountered by dying, and its power broken not by victory but by righteousness. For this is the wonderful fruit of the death of Christ: the power of death is exhausted by righteousness, He having taken upon Himself the curse, the judgment of sin, so that God might be glorified even herein. Hence the fullness of blessing and peace to the believer. This gives the atonement its wonderful place in all the truth of God. Nothing can be substituted for it. He in atonement is the substitute for all others, and everything else as claiming to do with offering for sin is vanished away.

But as to these chief priests, they mockingly cried, “Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Yea, so complete was the spirit of unbelief that they who were crucified, even in the midst of their dying agonies, had time to turn round and add to His sufferings. Mark does not mention the conversion of one of these thieves. Luke does, and we know that afterward the one who was converted, instead of asking Him to come down from the cross, owned Him to be the King before the kingdom comes, believing thus without seeing. The poor soul therefore shone through the grace of God, the more because of his own previous darkness: and the darkness of the chief priests who mocked formed the somber background which made this thief so conspicuous. In the very circumstances, over which the chief priests gloried as the defeat of Jesus, the thief gloried as deliverance for his own soul. But this falls to the province of Luke, who shows us the mercy of God that visits a sinner in his lowest estate—the Son of man coming to seek and to save that which was lost. This runs through Luke more than through any other Gospel. Consequently also he shows us the blessedness of the soul in its separate state. This dying thief, when his soul left the cross, would be at once with Jesus in Paradise.

Mark, however, mentions the indignity heaped upon Jesus by the thieves, along with their companions, the chief priests, and others.

“And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.” It was more than human—God caused a witness of that hour that stood out from all before and after. There was darkness; the very world felt it. As the Lord told the Jews, the stones would cry out unless there were a voice from babes and sucklings. As John the Baptist told them, of these stones God could raise up children to Abraham. So here, the insensibility of men, the revilings and scoffings from chief priests down to thieves, against the Son of God, were answered on God's part by the veiling of all nature in presence of the death of Him who created all; there was darkness over the whole land. Above, below, what a scene!

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It was no exhaustion of nature. Jesus did not die because He could not live, as all others do. He had still the full energy of life. He died not only in atonement, but to take His life again. How else could He have proved the superiority of His life to death, if He had not died? Still less could He have delivered us, “We were reconciled to God by the death of His death.”

But more than that. His living again, His raising Himself from the grave, His taking life again, proved that He had conquered death, to which He had so entirely submitted for God's glory. He was put to death. By wicked hands He was crucified and slain; yet it was also entirely voluntary. In every other person death is involuntary. So absolutely is Jesus above mere nature whether in birth or in death, or all through. Besides the cry was most peculiar, such as had never been heard from a blessed holy man as He was. That which drew it forth was God's forsaking Him there. It was not a mere manifestation of love, though there never was a time when the Father saw more to love in His Son than at that moment; yea, never did He see before then such moral beauty, even in Him. But if He was bearing sin, He must really endure its judgment. The consequence was to be forsaken of God. God must abandon Him who had taken sin upon Him. And He did take our sins and endured that forsaking which is the inevitable consequence of sin imputed. He who knew no sin knew the cost to the uttermost when made sin for us.

“And some of them that stood by when they heard it said, Behold he calleth for Elias.” This seems to be mere scoffing again. There is no reason to suppose they did not know that He said, “My God, my God,” not Elias. “And one ran and filled a spurge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone, let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.” Now that death was consummated, the only righteous ground of life and redemption, the “veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.” The Jewish system was doomed, and sentence executed upon its characteristic and central feature. The veil was that which separated the holy place from the holy of holies; there was no single point in the Jewish system more emphatic than the veil. For what the veil indicated as a figure was God present, but man standing outside; God dealing with the people, but the people unable to draw near to God, having Him with them in the world, but nevertheless not brought to Himself, not able to look upon His glory, kept at a distance from Him under the law. (Compare Heb. 9:8; 10:19, 20.) The rending of the veil, on the contrary, at once pronounced that all was over with Judaism. As the darkness supernatural was one testimony before His death, so this at His death declared the power of Christ's blood.

It was not only God come down to man, but man now by the blood of Christ entitled to draw near to God, yea, all who know the value of that blood into the holiest of all. But as far as the Jewish economy was concerned, here was the abolition of it come in principle. The tearing down this chief sign and token was the virtual profaning of the sanctuary; so that now any one could look into the holiest. It was no longer the high priest alone venturing within once a year, and that not without blood; but now, because of His blood which they had spilled, little knowing its infinite value, the veil was rent from top to bottom. This was in the first month of the year. The feast in which the high priest entered was in the seventh month. Thus the destruction of the veil was the more marked now. The truth is that the real application of the day of atonement and the following feast of tabernacles, will be when God begins to take up the Jewish people. We are said to have Christ as our passover; but the day of atonement, viewed as a prophetic type, awaits Israel by and by.

Nor was this all. There was a testimony not only in nature as opposed to the scorn of men and the revilings of the crucified ones that were with Him—not only was there this darkness of nature and rending of the veil for Judaism, but a Gentile was brought forward, compelled of God to acknowledge the wonder that was there and then being enacted. “Truly this man was the Son of God.” In all likelihood he was a heathen and did not mean more than to own that Christ was not a mere man, that He was somehow or other what the Chaldean monarch heard and spoke of in Dan. 2; 4 Now the centurion went farther than they of Babylon. He felt that, though His dwelling was in flesh, yet He was a divine being, and not the Son of man merely. I do not think that when Nebuchadnezzar says that he saw one like the Son of God, he meant the full truth that we know; for the doctrine of the eternal Sonship was not then revealed, and it could not be supposed that Nebuchadnezzar entered into it, for he was an idolater at that very time. But it was a testimony of his full confidence that it was a supernatural being of some kind, “the Son of God.” At the same time the Spirit of God could well give the centurion's, or the king's, words a shape beyond what either knew. “Truly this man was the Son of God.”

The disciples were not there. They alas! forsook Him and fled; at any rate, they are not mentioned. They were so out of their true place that God could say nothing about them. Yet one who up to this time had shrunk back from the due confession of Jesus was now brought forward. “And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.” The very circumstances that might have been supposed naturally to have filled him with fear of and shrinking from the consequences, were, on the contrary, used of God to bring out a boldness that never had visited Joseph's heart before. He identified himself with Jesus. He had not the precious place of following Him while He was alive, but the death of Jesus brought him to a point, commanded his affections, and made him, therefore, to enter courageously and demand the body of his master. Pilate, astonished, asks if Jesus was already dead. Naturally crucifixion is a slow death: people linger sometimes even for days when a person is in ordinary health. But in the case of Jesus it was but for a few hours. There was nothing farther to do. It was not, therefore, a question of mere lingering. Besides, it was the accomplishment of prophecy that not a bone should be broken, which John tells us, who is always occupied with the person of the Lord. It was according to the scriptures that He should be pierced, but not a bone should be broken, and this most remarkable circumstance John witnessed and tells us of. Mark does not notice it. Pilate “marveled if he were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him if he had been any while dead.” It was the rapid death of Jesus, accompanied by the loud voice, that filled the centurion with amazement. This showed that it was not the death of a mere man. He had power to lay down His life. So when he was certified by the centurion Pilate gives leave.

And Joseph “bought fine linen and took him down and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher.” And two of the Marys beheld where He was laid. Here at least then we have genuine affection. If there was not the intelligence of faith, there was the love that lingered over the Lord they adored with true feeling—the fruit of faith which thus honored Jesus even in His death.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 15:1-26, Remarks on

Nagy follows the consultation in the morning, after the Lord had been already condemned “to be guilty of death.” The result is that the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, the whole council, and indeed the whole people consenting, agreed to deliver Jesus to Pilate, the representative of the civil power. Jesus must be condemned by man in every capacity—the religious and civil, the Jews under the name of religion having the chief guilt and being the instigators of the civil authorities, morally compelling them to yield contrary to conscience, as we find in the mock trial before Pilate. Thus we see He was “despised and rejected of men.” It was not only by one, but by every class of men. We shall find that as the priests, so the people, and as the governor, so the governed, down to the basest of them, all joined in vilifying the Son of God.

“And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.” It was His good confession. It was the truth; and He came to bear witness of the truth, which is particularly mentioned in the Gospel of John, where we have not merely what Christ was according to prophecy, nor even what he was as the Servant and Great Prophet, doing the will of God and ministering to the need of man, but what He was in His own personal glory. Christ alone is the truth in the fullest sense, save that the Holy Ghost is also called “truth” (1 John 6), as being the inward power in him that believes for laying hold of the revelation of God and realizing it. But God as such is never called the truth. Jesus is the truth. The truth is the expression of what God is and what man is. He who is the truth objectively must be both God and man to make known the truth about them. Neither is the Father ever said to be the truth, but Christ, the Son, the Word. He is not only God, but the special One who makes known God; and, being man, He could make known man; yea, being both, He could make known everything. Thus we never know what life is fully, save in Christ, and we never know what death is, save in Christ. Again, who ever knows the meaning of judgment aright save in Christ? Who can estimate what the wrath of God is, save in Christ? Who can tell what communion with God is, save in Christ? It is Christ who shows us what the world is; it is Christ who shows us what heaven is and by contrast what hell must be. He is the Deliverer from perdition; and He it is who casts away from His own presence into it. Thus He brings out everything as it is—even that which is most opposed to Himself—Satan's power and character, even up to its last form—Antichrist. He is the measure of what Jews and Gentiles are in every respect. This is what some ancient philosophers used to think of man. They said, though falsely, that man is the measure of all things. It is exactly true of Christ, the God-man.

He is the measure of all things, though most immeasurably above them, as being supremely God, even as the Father and the Holy Ghost also.

Here, however, before Pilate, our Lord simply owns the truth of what He was according to Jewish expectation." Art thou the king of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it." This was all; He had no more to say here. The chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. He was not there to defend Himself, but to confess who and what He was. "And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marveled." His silence produced a far graver effect than anything that could be uttered. There is a time to be silent as there is to speak; and silence now was the more convincing to the conscience. He was manifestly superior, morally, to His judge. He was manifesting them all, whatever they might say or judge of Him. But in truth they judged nothing but what was utterly false, and they condemned Him for the truth. Whether it was before the high priest or before Pontius Pilate, it was the truth He confessed, and for the truth He was condemned by man. All their lies availed nothing. Hence it was not on the ground of what they brought forth, but of what He said, that Jesus was condemned. Only in John's Gospel the Lord states the terrible fact that it was not Pilate himself, but what he was put up to by the Jews. We learn further in John, that what frightened Pilate specially, was that the Jews told him that they had a law, and that by this law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Sun of God. His Sonship is affirmed, and Pilate feared it was true. His wife too had a dream which added to his alarm, so that God took care there should be a double testimony—the great moral testimony of Christ Himself, and also a sign and token, which suited the Gospel of Matthew, an outward mark given to Pilate's wife in a dream. Our gospel is much more succinct, and keeps to the order of facts without detail.

The iniquity of the Jews, however, appears everywhere. "Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they pleased. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude, crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them." So it was the multitude that wished to mark still more their complete subjection to the wicked priests by preferring Barabbas and sealing the death of Jesus. He might still have been delivered, but the infatuated multitude would not hear of it. "But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people that he should rather release Barabbas unto them," or, as John's Gospel puts it, "Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber." He was a robber and a murderer—yet such was man's preference to Jesus. "And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him." Pilate, cruel and hardened as he was, still remonstrates: "Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him." They could find no evil, they only imagined it out of the murderous evil of their own hearts. Pilate, utterly without the fear of God, but "willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified." So true it was that, even in this last scene, Jesus delivers others at His own cost and in every sense. He had just before delivered the disciples from being taken; He is now the means of delivering Barabbas himself, wicked as he was; He never saved Himself; He could have done it, of course, but it was the very perfection of the moral glory of Christ to deliver, bless, save, and in all at the expense of Himself.

But further, every indignity upon the way was heaped upon Him. "The soldiers led him away into the hall called Pretorium, and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns and put it about his head. And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!" There was no contempt too gross for Him. "They smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and, bowing their knees, worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him." And now, in the spirit of the wickedness of the whole scene, "they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus (cf. Rom. 16), to bear his cross." It would appear that these two sons were afterward well-known converts brought into the Church. Hence the interest of the fact mentioned. God's goodness, I suppose, used this very circumstance, wicked as it was on man's part. He would not allow that even His Son's indignity should not turn to the blessing of man. Simon, the father of these two, then, was compelled to bear His cross by those who held the truth, if at an, in unrighteousness.

"And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave him to drink, wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not." The object of giving this was to deaden anguish, the excessive lingering pain of the cross, but He refused. "And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take." This, we know from elsewhere, was the distinct accomplishment of divine prediction, as it was the human sign of one given up to capital punishment. "It was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, The King of the Jews." The terms are exceedingly brief in Mark's Gospel. He only mentions the charge or accusation, not (as I conceive) all the formula. The other gospels give different forms, and it is possible they were written in various languages—one in one language and one in another. If this be the case, Mark only gives the substance. Matthew would naturally give the Hebrew form, Luke the Greek (his Gospel being for Gentiles, as Matthew's was for Jews), while John would give the Latin, the form of that empire under which he himself suffered later on. As that kingdom smote the servant, he records what it had done to the Master, and this in the language of the empire. There is a slight difference in each, which may thus arise from the different languages in Which the accusation was written. At any rate, we know that we have the full divine truth in the compared matter; and of all ways of accounting for their shades of distinction, none more unworthy of God, nor less reasonable for man, than the notion that they are to be imputed to ignorance or negligence. Each wrote, but under the power of the Spirit; and the result of all is the perfect truth of God.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 14:26-72, Remarks on

The Lord now warns the disciples not only of what was about to befall Him, but how it would affect them. "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." The cross has its side of shame and pain and danger for us, as well as of salvation through Him who bore our sins there. But here it is the way in which it would prove, not deliver them, of which the Savior speaks. Does that mighty work of suffering for our sins, does the atonement "scatter" the sheep? Is it not on the contrary the only righteous foundation on which they are gathered? In virtue of Christ's death for our sins, the sheep, instead of being dispersed are gathered together into one, even other sheep beyond those which Christ had in the Jewish fold; so that there might be one flock and one Shepherd. (John 10; 11) But the smiting of the Shepherd expresses His utter humiliation as Messiah, cut off and having nothing. "I will smite," &c., refers to God's giving the Lord up to feel the reality of His rejection and death. No doubt atonement was therein wrought out. Smiting is a more general term; and though Christ takes it from God, it was literally His enemies who did the deed, and so became objects of divine vengeance, as in Psa. 69 Smiting was the loss, so to speak; atonement was the gain of all. Now that which was properly expiation or atonement was not the pure, however precious, act of Christ's death. Of course death was necessary for this as for other objects in the

counsels of God; but it is what Jesus went through from and with God, when made sin, it is what He suffered for our sins not only in body but in soul under divine wrath, that the atonement depends on. Many beside Jesus have been crucified; but atonement was in no way wrought there. Many have suffered horrors of torment for the truth's sake in life and up to death; but they would have been the first to abhor the falsehood that their sufferings atoned for themselves any more than for others. Many saints have known what it was to be “smitten,” and wounded of God, as the same Psalm testifies. In fact, this was more or less the place of God's servants, the prophets, and of righteous men from time to time in Israel, who accepted their affliction and persecution, whatever it was, from God and not man. This place the Lord Himself tested to the full; for in all things He must have the pre-eminence. He only wrought atonement; but He knew every sorrow which it was possible for man perfect, the Son of God, to take. The smiting of Him who was the shepherd, chief not only of the sheep but of the very prophets whom the Lord had raised up for Israel, refers to that utter cutting off which befell Him on the cross, but the sense of this not only He felt anticipatively, but it was that which was called forth before the cross. There was far more than atonement there. He realized in His soul all the condition in which God's people were, and His own total rejection, through man's sin and folly and Satan's maliciousness. The effect, then, of all this humiliation of the Savior, even before it was complete on the cross, was the scattering of the disciples; “the sheep shall be scattered.” They stumbled and fled the night before the blow actually fell on their Master. They did not understand the thing, any more than some do now the scriptures which speak of it, though the ground of the difficulty be wholly different. They could not make out why the Messiah should be thus treated, and how God should allow it. For it is plain that Christ took all from God (not man), and imputed all to Him. Faith never considers that afflictions spring out of the dust, but owns our Father's hand in everything, however in itself shameful and cruel if one looks at the secondary agents.

“But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.” The Lord assumes in resurrection His place of lowly service with the disciples. Peter, however, confident in his own strength and love to Christ, assures the Lord that although all should be stumbled, not so with him.

Alas! in divine things there is no more certain forerunner of a fall than self-reliance. And our Lord tells him, “Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.” So careful and minute is the record of the Lord's warning given in Mark—much more so than anywhere else. “But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in anywise.” However, it was not Peter alone who pledged his faithfulness thus vainly; for it is added, “Likewise also said they all.” They knew not their weakness; they knew not what it was to have the power of death pressing upon them. They had not faced the sense of total rejection by the world. Whatever there is of nature yet alive in our hearts is brought out by this. Man as such winces and refuses the trial. It is ever so till by the power of the Holy Ghost we realize our total separation from the world by and in the death of Christ. But to be dead with Him was not yet the known portion of the disciples; consequently, not one of them was able to stand. Afterward it was their privilege; but they had not gone that way heretofore. Jesus must go first. The sheep might follow after His cross in the Spirit. But Jesus must needs be the first. In due time, strengthened of His grace through His death, they too might glorify God by their death—death really for the sake of Christ.

The Lord, having all the closing scene before His soul, gives Himself to prayer. Now the effect of prayer is, in the face of deep trial, to make the trial more acutely felt. The presence of God does not make us feel less the wickedness of man; and certainly it does not make us feel less the failures, dangers, and ruin of His people. There could be no question of the smallest short-coming, no grief on any such score as this in the case of the Lord Jesus; but He realized the more the condition in which those were who belonged to God. Did He not feel the treachery of Judas, the denials of Peter, the flight of all? Even with, the apostates in Israel there was no hard indifference: how much more for the saints, the disciples, so shrinking at sue!) a time? He realized the awful crisis that awaited the people of God; He felt too what it was for Him the Messiah to be utterly refused by the people to their own hurt and destruction. What it was not only for Him who was life to go through death, and such a death, as could be known adequately only by Him! When the One that loved Him best hid His face from Him, when He was the object of divine judgment, when all that was in God of indignation and horror against evil concentrated itself against Christ! Then, again, what feelings of pity for the people who were forsaking their own mercies and the light of God for thick darkness and sorrow, through which they must pass retributively for that which they were about to perpetrate against Himself! All this, yea, infinitely more, was before the Lord, felt and weighed by Him as One whose grace associated Him with the condition of God's people, not substitutionally alone but in association of heart and in all affliction with them. In atonement He is absolutely alone. He asks no one to pray then, looks then for no comfort from them; nor does an angel come to strengthen Him then. He says, “My God” then, because it was what God felt against sin that He was enduring. “He might and did say “Father” too, because He did not cease to be the Son, any more than He ceased to be the blessed and perfect and obedient man. Thus He said “Father” both before and after that upon the cross. But He cried, “My God, my God” alone that time, as far as New Testament scripture speaks of His addressing Him: because then for the first time all that God was in hatred of evil, burst upon Him without the slightest mitigation or consideration of weakness. Nothing blunted its force. He was competent to bear, and He alone bore, the whole unbroken and unsparing judgment of God, and that without looking for the sympathy of the creature, whether of man or angel.

It was a question between God and Him alone when, on the cross made sin and retrieving the glory of God that had been compromised by all the world, He alone endured all in His own person. This is the difference between the cross and Gethsemane. At Gethsemane our Lord was, as it is written, sore amazed and very heavy. He had taken with Him three chosen witnesses, and He “saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here and watch.” So even these chosen ones He leaves behind; “he went forward a little and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.” It would not have been perfection if He had not thus felt it. It was impossible that He who was life could desire such a death from His Father—from God in wrath against Him. It would have been hardness, not love; but although He felt it perfectly according to God His Father, yet He entirely submits His human will to the Father's. “Abba, Father,” He says, “All things are possible unto thee. Take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.” He had a real soul, what is dogmatically called a reasonable soul, not a mere principle of vitality. He could not have said this, had it been true, as some have asserted, that the divine nature in our Lord took the place of a soul. He would not have been perfect man, had He not taken a soul as well as a body. Therefore could He say, “Not what I will, but what thou wilt.”

There was the most entire subjection to the Father even in the bitterest possible trial that could be conceived. This cup was the cup of wrath on account of sin; not to say, “let this cup pass from me,” would have shown insensibility to its character. But our Lord was perfect in everything. He therefore said, “Take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.” He comes and finds the disciples sleeping instead of watching. It grieved Him; and it was right that it should. He warned them however for their own sake: “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” They did enter into it and they fell, Peter especially, to whom indeed it was that our Lord uttered it. He called them all to watch and pray; but Peter was the one to whom He said, “Sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour?” He had particularly warned Peter before. He adds, “The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak; and again he went away and prayed and spake the

same words, and when he returned, he found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy), neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest, it is enough. The hour is come; behold the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." He was as one given up to be cut off from the last passover. From that the hour WAS come. "Rise up, let us go; lo he that betrayeth me is at hand." It was not atonement only, but the Shepherd was about to be smitten, and the sheep felt it and shrank away before the actual blow fell.

"And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders." The traitor had given the sign of a kiss, and told them to apprehend Him whom he kissed. And he went straight up to Jesus, and saith, "Master, master, and kissed him; and they laid their hands on him and took him." Peter, ready enough to fight though not to pray, draws his sword and smites the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. The healing is not mentioned in this Gospel; for here the Lord is simply the suffering or of man, the rejected prophet of Israel, the smitten Shepherd. What proves His unabated power is not the point here; but His bowing to all shame, and the key is, "the Scripture must be fulfilled." He had never been one to call for such treatment from their hands, coming out against Him as against a thief, but the Scripture must be fulfilled.

"And they all forsook him and fled." Power would have kept them, but to yield to suffering began to take effect upon them. "The sheep were scattered." "And there followed him a certain young man having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, and the young men laid hold on him, and be left the linen cloth and fled from them naked." Vigor fails: so does shame. The first assault was enough to drive him away. Man is powerless to face death. The only reason why believers are able to face it, nay, even to welcome it and rejoice in it, is because of Christ Himself and His death. He has taken out the sting; but it was not yet done. Consequently the disciples forsook Him and fled, young man and all. In Christ alone who suffered for us we stand.

"And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes." There we find a fresh trial. Peter follows, afar off it is true, into the palace of the high priest and seats himself with the servants. "And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none." They found the will, but not the power; readiness to testify, but even in that they could not succeed. Man fails in everything, except in malice against Jesus. Even with all the suborned testimony on the part of the witnesses, and all the readiness to condemn on the part of the judges, everything failed. The testimony did not agree. As required by law, there must be two or three witnesses agreed; but these agreed not. The consequence was that Jesus was rejected not for the false testimony of man, but on the true testimony of God. It was for His own testimony that they condemned Him. He came witnessing to the truth, and He witnessed to it unto death. The high priest astonished, perplexed, and failing to condemn Him on the witness of others, demands, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" We are told elsewhere that he puts the oath to Him or adjures Him; but here it is simply the question without the oath Mark names. The Lord answers "I am." He witnesses a good confession, not only before Pontius Pilate, but before the high priest. "And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." He could not, would not deny the truth about Himself. He might refrain from noticing the false charges of others; but He would not when challenged, shut up in His own breast the truth of His personal glory. He was the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed. But He was the Son of man also, and was going to take His place above, as well as to come in the clouds of heaven, according to the sure oracles of God. "Then the high priest rent his clothes and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy." To him the truth was no better; so completely sealed in darkness was the head of religion among the Jews. "What think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face and to buffet him and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands."

The Shepherd thus must be smitten every way. "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." And so we find that Peter, having ventured thus far into the palace of the high priest, yet more feels the effect immediately. "As Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest." Still he could not remain in presence of his own falsehood, he goes out into the porch: "and the cock crew," this was the Lord's warning to him. A maid sees him again. It must be so. There was nothing apparently to cause terror; but so utterly powerless was even this most devoted of the disciples, at least most ardent in his love and most energetic in his demonstrations, so powerless was he to face even the nearness of death, that it suffices for a servant maid's word to bring out his denial of the Lord! "A little after they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto." But the more they pressed the truth upon him, the more he retreated and, in his abject fear, began to curse and to swear.

Such was Peter and such was the process through which he was soon to come out the chief of the apostles. He had to be broken down to learn the good-for-nothingness of flesh. How entirely thenceforth it must be Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost! "I know not this man of whom ye speak." Yet "this man" was his Savior; and he knew it—too well—too ill. "Thou art the Christ" he had said before. What a contrast now! "Whom say ye that I am?" Jesus had said to him long before: and his answer was "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "We believe and are sure." Now he says, "I know not this man." Jesus to him now was a mere man, unknown of Peter. Yet flesh and blood had not revealed the truth about Christ to him, but the Father which was in heaven. Peter, therefore, was near enough, when the rest were scattered, to add a sharper blow to the many which fell upon Jesus. One of the little number of disciples was a traitor—another, and be the chief of the apostles, a denier of his Lord.

"And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon he wept." I do not say that his repentance was complete: you will find that the Lord touched him to the quick some time after. Nevertheless there was genuine feeling of his sin, shame, and anguish of spirit, though he had not yet been probed to the bottom. He wept as he thought thereon. It is always the word of the Lord that produces real repentance whether in a saint or a sinner. It is not human feeling, nor shame, nor the fear of being found out; the word wrought within that Jesus spike. It is the washing of water by the word. The word of the Lord does two things; it convicts and it heals; it cleanses as well as detects our evil after a divine sort. Had Peter believed Christ's word as to his own entire weakness, he would have been kept. But he believed it not. "Though all," he said, "shall be offended, yet will not I." He was ready to die with Him. Whereas in truth the mere surface of the scene of Christ's death frightened him so that, the more urgently the truth of his relation to Jesus was brought before him, the more he swore that he knew Him not. Such is flesh even in the saint of God—good for nothing everywhere.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 14:1-25, Remarks on

We have here a supper at Bethany and a supper at Jerusalem: one of them simply a supper in the house of those whom Jesus loved; the other a new thing instituted at the paschal feast which it was to set aside, while for the Church it was to be the standing memorial of the Lord Jesus that should follow.

But these two suppers have a very weighty place, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ being not only the great central truth of the latter, but also in the former, what the Spirit of God brought before the spiritual instincts of Mary. She felt it, though not from any positive communication to her, but from that love to the Savior which the Spirit made sensitive of the danger hanging over Him in a way she could not express. The Lord, who knew her love and all that was at hand, interpreted her act as done with a view to His burying. On both occasions the disciples enter most feebly into the good and the evil, but God Himself made manifest His own hand and mind as that which governed all. This is the more striking, because on the occasion of the supper at Bethany, or rather connected with it, the chief priests and scribes, though they sought how they might take Jesus “by craft and put him to death,” had fully determined that it should not be “on the feast-day lest there be an uproar of the people.” God, however, had already from of old decided that it was to be that day and no other—on the foundation feast of all the feasts, on the passover, which was, in fact, the type of the death of Christ. Thus we have God and man at issue; but I need not say God carries out His own will, though He does it through the wicked instrumentality of the very men who had resolved it was not so to be. Indeed it is always thus. God does not govern only His own children; even the destruction of wicked men is not the carrying out of their own will but of God's will. Therefore it is written, “who were of old ordained to this condemnation.” Again, they were appointed to stumble at the word, being disobedient. It is not that God makes any man to be wicked. But when man, fallen into sin, goes on in his own self-will, loving darkness rather than light and enslaved to Satan, God nevertheless proves that He always holds the reins, and keeps the upper hand, and even in the path their lust or passion chooses to take, fails not to accomplish His own will. It is like a man who, under intoxication, thinks to carry out some purpose of his, seeks, for instance, to steer to some place on the right hand, but really tumbles into a ditch on the left. So man after all cannot but do what God has determined beforehand. His will is powerless save to evince his sin. God's will always governs, though men prove themselves inexcusably wicked in the way it is brought about. Just so here. Man resolved to kill Jesus, but made up his mind that it should not be on the feast-day. God had arranged long before they were born that on the feast-day their deed was to take place. And so it did.

As we have seen, also, the supper at Bethany gave occasion to the first conception of the treachery of Judas. Satan put it into his heart. It was a scene of love, but such a scene draws quickly out the hatred of those that have no love. Mary's worshipping affection for the person of the Lord and her sense of His danger led her on till the house of Bethany was filled with the sweet odor of the ointment she poured forth. But Judas roused the carnal mind of the other disciples; be had no communion with her: Jesus was not precious in his eyes. He, therefore, was carping where Jesus was the adored object of Mary. It was so much taken from his own ill-gotten gains. He only pleaded the cause of the poor, and stirred up the other disciples about it—so that “there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?” But love, while it would lavish all, never wastes anything; self does, idle folly does, but love never.

The Lord pleaded her cause. “Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me.” There is no work so good as that done on Jesus. Works done for Jesus' sake are good, but what was done to Himself was far better. She had done not the least of what grace had wrought up to that day. “She hath done what she could she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.” Most fitly though of grace is this woman's good deed bound up with the name of Jesus, wherever He is preached here below. We have not her name here; we learn it was Mary the sister of Lazarus, and this from John who appropriately lets us know, because he tells us of Jesus calling His own sheep by name. Here the point was not so much who had done it, but that it was done—the ministry, so to speak, of a woman at such a time who loved the Lord Jesus, in view of His burial. Further, we gather from this how one corrupt person can defile even those who have true hearts for Christ. The disciples were quickly caught by Judas's fair pretenses on behalf of the poor and allowed his insinuation to lead themselves into murmurings which reflected on Christ, as much as they slighted the devotedness of Mary.

In contrast with the love of Mary, Judas goes forth “to the chief priests, to betray him unto them.”

But now comes the supper of the paschal feast at Jerusalem, where the Lord acts as master of that institution and creator of a greater one. As on His entrance into Jerusalem, they had demanded in the name of the Lord the ass's colt, saying that the Lord had need of him, so here “He sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, “Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.” It was One who, though He was going to die, still went there with royal, divine rights; He had not forfeited His place as Messiah though going to suffer as Son of man on the cross. He, therefore, takes possession as the Master, and the goodman of the house at once acquiesces in His claim. All was before His eyes. There was no lack of power to act upon the conscience and affections of men. He could have turned all others as He bowed this man's heart. But how then should the scriptures have been accomplished, and sin blotted out, and God glorified? It was necessary, therefore, that He should go to the cross, not as any victim of necessity, but as one whose will was only to do the will of His Father, accepting all His humiliation from Him.

“And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?” There was conscious integrity in the disciples, weak as they might be, and fleshly as we know from Luke they were, even in this very scene. But the Lord answers, “It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.” It was man's sin, Satan's guile, God's counsel, and Christ's love. But none of these things altered the wickedness of Judas: “Good were it for that man if he had never been born.” He was ordained, we may say, for this condemnation: he was not made wicked by God, but his wickedness was made to take this shape in order to fulfill the counsels of God. One of that company which was chosen to be with Jesus here below, was to prove this awful truth—that the nearer a man is externally to blessing, if he does not receive it into his heart, the more distant he is morally from it. There was but one Judas in Israel, and he was nearest to Jesus; there was but one who united all the privileges of such companionship with Jesus to all the guilt of betraying Him.

Then in verses 22-25, He institutes the supper—His own supper. It was not the paschal feast; and we learn from Luke that He would not touch the paschal cup. He would drink no more of the fruit of the vine until He drank it new with them in the kingdom of God. He refused that which was the sign of communion in things here below. His Father, God, was before Him, and suffering His will rather than doing it. But meanwhile, before that kingdom come, founded on His suffering unto death, there is the remembrance of a totally different thing; not of a kingdom, power, and glory, but of crucifixion in weakness; His body broken (as He says, “This is my body”), and His blood, the blood of the new covenant, shed for many. It was not for the Jew only, but shed for many.

Nothing can be simpler than the terms in which He institutes the supper, as given in Mark. It was, I do not doubt, intended both to refer to the passover as accomplished now, and also to bring in the power of the new covenant for the soul before it comes in for the people of Israel.

Rectitude of heart and the truth always go together. This is seen in Christ, who was Himself the Truth—it was in Him, and He was it; but we must always know in part. In Christ alone was there perfect reality, sincerity; and we have sincerity in so far as we have Him. Where Christ is not there is no sincerity—that is reality. There may be what men call sincerity, where the heart is dark, and has been badly taught; but in this case there cannot be reality, for the truth only is real.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 12:18-44, Remarks on

“Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked, him saving, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed; and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed; last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.” (Ver. 18-23.)

Here again it was merely a difficulty. The Sadducees were the infidel party; and all the apparent strength of infidelity lies in putting difficulties, in raising up imaginary cases which do not apply, in reasoning from the things of men to the things of God. The whole basis is false assumption. The Lord says to them, “Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures neither the power of God.” They betrayed as usual, their ignorance of the Scriptures, spite of much pretentiousness: else they would not have put such a case. As for difficulties, what are they to the power of God, supposing there were difficulties to man? But what is beyond the power, and conception of man, is very possible to God: all things are possible even to him that believeth. But the truth is that it was total ignorance to suppose that in the resurrection state such a contingency could arise. The question, besides, took for granted the resurrection, which was exactly what they denied.

Skepticism is habitually crooked—not less false than superstition. Whose would this woman be who had the seven husbands successively? The answer is, she would belong to none then. There is no such thing as a resumption of earthly ties in the resurrection. People do not rise from the dead as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters or servants. Next, the Lord meets the question, not on the ground of their difficulty or mistake, but on its own merits according to the word of God. “When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise, have ye not read in the book of Moses, how, in the bush, God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.”

This portion He takes not because it is the clearest scripture in the Old Testament, but because it is in the books of Moses, which these Sadducees chiefly valued. God never gave the land of Israel in actual possession to Abraham or Isaac or Jacob when they were alive in their natural bodies; yet He did promise them the land, not merely to their children but to themselves. Therefore they must rise in order to have that land so promised to them. God gave them the land in promise; but they never possessed it: they must therefore possess it another day. And as this possession cannot be in their dead state, they must live again in order actually to have the promised land. The resurrection therefore is proved from God's declaring Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. It is impossible that the promise He made them should not be fulfilled.

Then come the scribes. One of them “having heard them reasoning together and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” The scribe was obliged to acknowledge the Lord's wisdom.

He comprises the pith of the law of God in these two extracts—the love of God which is unlimited, the love of one's neighbor not with all the soul and strength, but “as thyself.” The first is loving God more than oneself to the exclusion of every other object as a competitor: the second is loving one's neighbor as oneself. In effect he that loves God and his neighbor has fulfilled the law, as the Apostle says. Grace goes farther than that—even to the total renunciation of self. The grace of God which assimilates the Christian's spirit, according to the power of his faith, to the revelation which He has made of Christ, leads a person even to death for his brother's sake; “we ought to lay our lives down for the brethren” still more for Pod and the truth. “And the scribes said unto him, well master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God and there is none other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings, and sacrifices.”

He owns in his conscience that thus to love God and one's neighbor is far better than all upon which the Jews put such stress and value—the outward forms and ceremonies of the law. But there he ended: he saw not Christ; grace therefore was unknown to this man. So that all the Lord could say to him was, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” Still he was outside; for grace alone brings into the kingdom of God through the knowledge of Christ. And whether a person is near or far off from the kingdom of God, it is equally destruction if he does not enter it. This scribe owned what was in the law; but he did not know what was in Christ. The grace of God that brings salvation he knew nothing of Duty to God and to his neighbor he owned. He set to his seal that the law was just and good (and so it is); not that God is true as revealed in Christ. After this no man durst ask Him anything more. They were answered and silenced in everything.

The Lord now puts His question. It was a brief one and totally different from the points raised by men. Man's questions were founded either upon present things, or upon improbabilities to his mind, or upon the casuistry of rival duties. Christ's question is founded directly on the Scriptures, and more than that, on the mystery of His own person, that only link of souls with God. Christ's question had nothing of curiosity in it, nor was it merely one for conscience, but for searching into God's ways and implicit submission to the revelation of Himself. “How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David?” It was true the Lord did not deny that the scribes saw the truth; but He raised a question which, if answered truly, holding fast the Scriptures, would have led them to the truth about His own Person. In a word, it was this: How is Christ David's Lord as well as David's Son? The scribes saw truly enough that He was David's Son; but David writing by the Holy Ghost said that He was his Lord. How are these two things to be put together, the lower truth with which the scribes were occupied, and the higher one on which the Holy Ghost specially insists? How was Christ David's Son and David's Lord? The link and foundation of it was this, that while He was man, and as man David's son, He was much more. In order to be David's Lord, He must be a divine person, but more than that, He is exalted into that place. The Lordship of Christ rests not alone on His being a divine person; but because He was rejected as Son of David. God has exalted Him to be both Lord and Christ. This opens the whole question of Israel's treatment of Christ, as well as of Jehovah's attitude toward Him. In Psalm 110 we read, “Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Here it is not God sending His well-beloved Son down to the vineyard of Israel; but, when He was cast out, raising Him to His own right hand in heaven. Thus it involves their owning that Israel must have rejected their Messiah, and that, when rejected, God sets Him at His own right hand in heaven. This, evidently, is the key to the present position of Israel, and leaves room for the calling of the Church; in a word, it is the mystery of the person of Christ and the counsels of God, that follows upon His rejection.

But He does more than this. “He said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places, and the chief seats in the synagogues and the uppermost rooms at feasts.” It is not only that the doctrine of the scribes is utterly imperfect, but even in their ways there was much that was morally low and bad. They loved the honor of men, religious honor peculiarly, and therefore the chief seats in the synagogues, besides the uppermost rooms at feasts. Everything that would contribute to their ease and honor in this world was eagerly sought. More than this, they devour widows' houses; that is, they take advantage even of the sorrows of people that would expose them to be more entirely under their influence. Along with this there was great religious ostentation, for a pretense making long prayers. “These shall receive greater damnation.”

But now the Lord singles out those with whom He had sympathy on the earth. “Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much, and there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites which make a farthing; and he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury.” The reason He gives: “for all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.” God does not go by the amount given; He judges not by what is contributed, but by what is kept behind for self. In this case it was nothing—all was given. Those who gave of their abundance reserved the greater part for themselves; but the test of liberality is not what is given, but what is left. The much that is kept for self-enjoyment is the proof of how little is given. But when there is nothing left, but all is cast into the treasury of God, there is the true working of divine love and faith. There is what God values, because it is the expression not only of generous giving, but of entire confidence in Himself. This poor woman was a widow, and it might have seemed that she of all others was entitled to keep what little she had; but no, little as it was, all is for God. The dealing with such a small sum might have been a trouble to those who would have to count it, but it was noticed of God, valued by Him, and recorded for us, that we may confide in God, and may give whatever is according to His mind.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 12:1-17, Remarks on

The parable with which this chapter opens, sets forth in a few plain words, and in highly pregnant touches, the moral history of Israel as under the dealings of God. In what follows we have the various classes of Israel successively exposing themselves, while they were attempting to perplex the Lord. They thought to judge Him; the result was, they were themselves judged. But in the parable with which the chapter begins, the Lord sets forth God's dealings with the nation as a whole. “A certain man planted a vineyard and set an hedge about it.” There was everything done on God's part both to give them what was of Himself, and separate them from the rest of sinful men. They were duly warned against contamination by heathen corruptions. He “digged a place for the winefat.” There was every suited preparation for the full results of their work, and there was also full protection, for He “built a tower.” Thus the owner let it out to husbandmen, and “went into a far country.” This set forth their responsibility. The Jewish system in the past is man under probation. “At the season He sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.” It is the moral trial of man exemplified in Israel's conduct. Man is bound to make returns to God, according to the position in which God has set him. Israel had every possible advantage given them by God. They had priests, religious ordinances, fast-days, feast-days, every help of an outward kind and even miraculous testimony from time to time. There was nothing wanting that man could have, short of Christ Himself; and even of Him they had the promise, and were after a sort, we know, waiting for Him as their King. They had promises held out to them, and a covenant made with them. In short, there was nothing they had not that could be of any avail, had it been possible to have got any good thing out of man. But can any good thing come out of the heart? Is not man a sinner? Is he not utterly defiled and unclean? Can you get a clean thing out of an unclean? It is impossible by any means used, to act upon man. You may bring a clean thing among unclean, but if a creature merely, it becomes defiled. If it be the Creator, He can deliver, but not even so by merely coming down into the midst of men. It requires more than this—His death. Death is the only door of life and redemption for the lost.

The Lord, then, gives the history of what they did render to God. The servant being sent, “they caught him and beat him and sent him away empty.” There was no fruit to God—nothing but evil. There was insult to Himself and injury to His servants. “And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away (not only empty, but) shamefully handled.” One sin leads to a greater sin where it is not judged. “And again he sent another; and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some.” They are rapidly sliding down the descent to destruction. There remained only one possible motive to act upon the heart of man. “Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son.” Would not one be acceptable who was infinitely greater in dignity and absolutely without a fault? For even prophets had faults; though there was great power of God in and by them, they were encompassed with infirmities, like other men. But the Sun was perfection: what if He were to come? Surely

they must feel that the Son of God had an incomparably higher claim upon their affections and their reverence. And so it would have been, had not man been utterly lost. And that was the moral lesson as to man brought out in the cross. Man was then proved to be utterly corrupt. God allowed it to be shown to the uttermost practically by the people of Israel. Nothing proved it so completely as the mission of the Son of God. The trial then closed in His rejection: but His rejection was their rejection before God. Man, no matter how tried or how greatly privileged, ends in proving his total opposition to God, his hopeless ruin in His sight. “But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” It was an opportunity for the will of man not to be lost. Satan led them on to wish to have the world to themselves. This is what man most values—to shut God out of His own world: and it was consummated by no act so much as by their killing the Lord Jesus—by His cross. It was man's rejection of God in the person of His Son. Henceforth he was shown to be evidently not only weak and sinful, but God's enemy. Even when He was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself man not only preferred but was determined to have the world without God. In fact this manifests that the world lies in the wicked one; and Satan, who was really the prince of the world before, became, on the casting out of Him who was God, the god of the world then. Man must have some god over him; if he rejects the true God in the person of Christ, Satan becomes his god not really alone, but in this case manifestly. “And they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.” This closes the probationary measures. “What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.” Nothing is said here of their rendering Him the fruits in their seasons, as we have in Matthew. It is the breaking of the old links with Israel (indeed with man), and the giving the place of privilege to others. But more than that; the destruction of the old husbandmen follows. This has already taken place in part in the downfall of the Jewish people and of Jerusalem. Nor is this all. “Have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?” The Spirit does not here introduce the further fact related in Matthew. Not only is the stone to be exalted, the rejected prophet to become the exalted Lord (that is quite in keeping with Mark's object), but in Matthew the other positions of the stone are developed more. First of all, He is a stone of stumbling on the earth; and next the stone, after His exaltation, falls upon its enemies at the close and grinds them to powder. This is connected with the prophecies and their accomplishment for both the Jews and the world. The Jews did trip upon Him in His humiliation when He was upon the earth; but when they finally take the place of adversaries, not only in unbelief, but in deadly opposition, forming indeed the chosen party of His great enemy, the Antichrist—upon them He will fall destructively at the end of the age. In Mark, however, it is simply that the rejected stone is exalted. This at once was felt by the hearers. “They sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people; for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him and went their way.”

Now comes the trial of the different classes into which the Jews were divided. “They send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to catch him in his words:” ominous alliance! for ordinarily the Pharisees and Herodians were bitterly hostile to each other. The Pharisees were the great sticklers for religious forms; the Herodians were more the courtier party, the men who cultivated every means of advancing their interests in the world, as the others did for securing a religious reputation. But where Christ is concerned, the most opposed can unite against Him or His truth. “And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth.” They stooped to flattery and falsehood to effect their malicious end. What they said was, no doubt, true in itself, but it was utterly false as the expression of their feelings and judgment about Him. “Is it Lawful to give tribute to Cesar, or not?” Shall we give, or shall we not give?” They wished to involve the Lord in a Yea or Nay that would compromise Him either with the Jews or with the Romans. If He said, Yes, then He was giving up the hopes of Israel apparently; He was but sealing them up in their bondage to the Romans. How could he be a truehearted Jew or still more the Messiah their expected Deliverer, if He left them as much as ever slaves of the Roman power? If He said, No, then He would make Himself obnoxious to that jealous government, and give them a handle against Him as a setter-up of seditious claims for the throne of Palestine. But the Lord replies with consummate and divine wisdom; and “knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Bring me a penny that I may see it. And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” This answer was complete and absolutely perfect: For in truth there was no conscience in them. Had they felt aright they would have been ashamed of the fact that the money current in their land was Roman money. It was their sin: and man, while he rejects Christ, refuses to look at his own sin. The Lord Jesus leaves them where their sin had brought them, makes them feel that it was their own fault and sin that had put them under the Romans' authority. He simply says, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” If you are here by your own fault, subject to Caesar for your sins, own the truth of your state and its cause, and pay what is due to Caesar; but forget not that God never ceases to be God, and see that you render to Him the things that are His. They were neither honest subjects of Caesar, nor were they, still less, faithful to God. Had they been true to Him, they would have received the Lord Jesus. But there was neither conscience nor faith.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 11:15-33, Remarks on

After hearing the doom of the barren fig-tree, they come to Jerusalem and enter the temple, whence the Lord began to cast out those who sold and bought therein, overthrowing the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of the dove-sellers, and suffering none to carry a vessel through the temple. This He followed up by teaching openly what is written in Isa. 56:7, Jer. 7:11—God's purpose in the temple and meanwhile man's selfish misuse of it. “Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers.” (Ver. 15-18.) The prophetic reproof was not powerless, but it fell into a soil fruitful only in thorns and briers, worthless, and nigh to that curse, if not under it, which had just lit upon the type of their estate. “And the chief priests and the scribes heard [it], and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the multitude were astonished at his doctrine.” Truly their end was to be burned: God was not in their thoughts, but man; and self, not conscience, governed them. But what a picture! The righteous, elect Servant, the Son of God, hated to death—not of the crowd who, if thoughtless and fickle, at least hung on unwonted words of holy vindication of God, of goodness toward man, of stern rebuke for the proud perverters of sacred things. Alas! it was these, the chiefs of religion, the theologians of that day, who quailed before the light of God and sought only to extinguish it, that they might still preserve their influence among the men they loved not, but despised. And is the world, or its religion, better now?

What could detain Jesus in such a scene, the more revolting because it a as in title and responsibility “the holy city?” Nothing but the errand of holy love on which He came. Hence at the approach of night, His work for that day done, He retires once more without the city. (Ver. 19.) Who but the enemy could have insinuated the blasphemous thought that it was because that city was too hallowed ground for Him to rest on as yet?

As they passed next morning, the sight of the fig tree dried up from the roots recalled the curse of yesterday to Peter. The Master's answer was, “Have faith in God” —a more pointed form of speech than that in the Gospel of Matthew, and of the gravest moment for the servants of God in presence of the guilt and ruin of that which seems fairest, or at least is most esteemed among men. As the fig-tree symbolized the people in their religious pretensions, now manifestly vain and so judged of Him whose right it was and is, “this mountain” appears to denote rather their “place and nation,” which in their unbelief they strove hard to keep under Roman patronage. (“We have no king but Caesar.”) Strong as it stood in Jewish eyes, before the faith of the disciples it was doomed and soon about to be violently rooted up and lost in the sea of Gentiles.1 Such is the declared efficacy of faith; but another requisite is (which faith indeed would effect) the spirit of gracious forgiveness toward any who might have wronged or otherwise offended us. (Ver. 25, 26.) In Matthew this has its place in the Sermon on the Mount and especially in the prayer, as the retributive converse appears in the parable of the merciless servant. In Luke the principle comes out in another shape.

The next visit to Jerusalem (ver. 27-33) confronts the Lord, as He walks about in the temple, with the chief priests and the scribes and the elders, who demand by what authority He was doing these things, and who gave it Him. Jesus pledges Himself to speak as to His authority, if they answer His question as to John's baptism—was it of heaven or men? It was an appeal to conscience; but conscience they had none, save a bad one, which at once shrank into reserve, fearful to commit itself, not afraid to trifle with God and man. For they reasoned with themselves that, allowing John's baptism to be of heaven, they must receive his testimony to Jesus; asserting it to be of men, they must forfeit the people's favor, John being universally held to be in very deed a prophet. They preferred therefore to shelter themselves under a seemingly prudent ignorance. Who were they, then, to question the authority of Jesus? If they could only say “we know not,” their incompetency was confessed. Those who could not solve the question of the servant were surely not qualified to judge of the Master. In truth, their incapacity was, if possible, less than their hypocritical wickedness: the will was at fault yet more than the understanding.

The Lord might well be excused answering such a question to such men. What a position for those who examined His authority to find themselves in! Left under the shadow and shame of their own avowed ignorance in the presence of the gravest religious problem then before them, they are obliged to bow to Him who closes the inquiry with unspeakable dignity, and with the most befitting wisdom, “Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Lord, Thou knewest all things; Thou knewest that these men hated Thee!

Remarks on Mark, Mark 11:1-14, Remarks on

The Savior now proceeds on His last journey to Jerusalem, His final presentation of Himself, as far as testimony went, as the Messiah. His prophetic task had been accomplished and refused; the great work of atonement lay yet before Him. Between the two comes His royal progress, we may call it, to the city of the Great King. Nevertheless, as He was the predicted Prophet like unto Moses, and yet never man spake like this man; as He was the antitype of all the sacrifices, and yet they were but the shadow, not the very image, of the coming good, so there was a character wholly diverse from the manner of kings, in the King of kings and Lord of lords, as He came to His own possession here below, His peculium, raising and settling the question whether His own people would receive Him.

“And when they came nigh to Jerusalem [unto Bethphage], and unto Bethany, to the Mount of Olives, he sendeth two of his disciples, and saith to them, Go into the village that is over against you; and immediately on entering into it, ye will find a colt tied, upon which none of men hath sat: loose and bring it. And if any one say to you, Why do ye this? say, The Lord hath need of it; and immediately he sends it here."1 (Ver. 1-3.)

It is preeminently a scene under the governing hand of God. He would and did control the feelings of such as witnessed the colt taken; even as He afterward directed the deeds and acclamations of the multitude by the way. “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.” Indeed this is so much the case that I suspect “the Lord” is here, as in Mark 5:19, left purposely vague. The Lord had need of the ass's colt, whether they referred the title to Jehovah or to the king who thus came in His name. If their faith really recognized the Messiah in Jehovah, it was most true, and so much the better for those who did; but I am not sure that it could be asserted as the intention of the Spirit to imply that so much was meant in either of these cases. It is only in the two closing verses of this gospel that we can certainly gather that He is designated “the Lord.” The suitableness of this reserve till the statement of His final triumph by our evangelist who devotes himself to His service here below is strikingly beautiful, and equally so in its absence before, and in its presence then.

“And they went away and found a colt tied to the door without at the crossway; and they loose it. And some of those standing there said to them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said to them even as Jesus said: and they suffered them. And they bring the colt to Jesus and cast their garments on it; and he sat upon it. And many strewed their garments on the way, and others beds of twigs, having cut them from the fields.2 And those that went before and those that followed cried out saying, Hosanna! blessed [be] be that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed [be] the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest.” (Ver. 4-10.)

It was a singularly bright testimony to the ways of God; and this not alone in the ever-adorable One who thus deigned to offer Himself to the acceptance of His people, but in the suited cries of the multitude, little as they realized the truth of their own words or the gravity of the situation for their nation and city from that day to this. God, I repeat, was moving in the midst. He would have a testimony, true but despised, to the King, humble Himself as He might. Matthew points out the fulfillment of the prophetic oracle in the strange sight of that day. Luke adds “peace in heaven and glory in the highest” in the praise to God which filled the mouths and hearts of the disciples, as well as the blessed Savior's lament and tears over Jerusalem. It fell more within the domain of Mark to say that He “entered into Jerusalem into the temple; and having looked round on all things, the hour being already late, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.”

Matthew, as often, does not distinguish the stages of the transaction. From his account you could not gather that the Lord merely looked round on all, the first day of His visit, and that not till the following day did He cast out those who desecrated the temple with their buying and selling as he alone describes the approach to Him there of the blind and lame (Matt. 21:14) to be healed. I am aware that some have tried to solve the difficulty by the assumption that Matthew gives us a purging of the temple on the first day, Mark on the second. But this appears to me definitely set aside by the precision of our evangelist's language about this second day, who tells us (ver. 15) that then, not on the first

day, He began to cast out those who sold and bought in the temple.

John, on the other hand, entirely omits this cleansing of the temple, but records (chap. 2.) what no one else has done, an early act of similar character before our Lord entered on His public or Galilean ministry. But this is exquisitely in keeping with the whole scope of his gospel, which starts as it were with the point to which the other evangelists gradually conduct us—the utter rejection of the Lord by His people, who abhorred Him, as He could not but loathe them.

There is a similar merging of a twofold account in one view, if we compare Matthew's description of the cursed fig-tree with Mark's. “And on the morrow, when they came out from Bethany, he was hungry; and seeing a fig-tree from afar having leaves, he came, if perhaps he might find something on it; and having come up to it, he found nothing but leaves: for it was not the time of figs. And, answering, he said to it, Let none eat fruit of thee any more forever. And his disciples heard.” (Ver. 12-14.) Had it been fig-season, the fruit might have been already gathered; but as it was not, fruit ought to have been found there, unless the tree were barren. Thus it was, the emblem of the Jew, fruitless to God, however abounding in the semblance of life before men. Leaves the tree had, but no fruit. Hence the doom was pronounced, not more surely verified in the fig-tree then than ever since in the empty profession of the Jews.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 10:46-52, Remarks on

A new division of our gospel here opens. It is the Lord's final presentation of Himself to the nation as Messiah. His ministerial work was closed. Here He is viewed as Son of David.

“And they came to Jericho.” That city which first opposed itself to the entrance of Israel into the land of promise, but fell by the mighty power of God, when His people submitted themselves to His word by Joshua: that city which brought the predicted curse on him and his sons who reared it again; that city whose waters were healed, and from whose land barrenness was taken away in grace by the prophet, is the scene of a remarkable display of beneficent power, in answer to the faith that owned the promised Seed and King.

“And as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, at by the wayside begging.” I do not doubt that it is the same incident which is recorded in Matt. 20 and in Luke 18 But the differences are so great as to have occasioned doubts of this in some. The truth is that each is perfect. Matthew gives the double cure—true to his habit (see chap. 3) and the exigency of Jewish witness. Luke so states it that the careless might infer that the cure took place as the Lord went into (instead of as He came out of) Jericho. His moral order required the juxtaposition of the tale of Zacchaeus and the parable of the nobleman, as illustrating the scope of the two advents, and hence displaced of necessity the story of the blind man. But Luke takes care to say, not “as he was come nigh unto Jericho” (as the English Bible and others), but “as he was nigh to Jericho," ' without saying whether it was His coming or His going. He was in that neighborhood. Some MSS. give, “the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, sat,” &e. The Sinai copy has “blind and a beggar.” As usual, our evangelist relates the facts and even names with characteristic precision. “And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me.” No expression of unbelief on the part of others could stifle his own cry of faith. It was, no doubt, in keeping with his wants to call on Him to whom Isaiah of old testified, “Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened.” Others knew this scripture as well as Bartimaeus, but he claimed the blessing from the despised Nazarene. They said they saw, and therefore their sin remained. As for him he was confessedly miserable, poor, and blind; naked, too, he was content to be, if he might the more readily cast himself on the Lord. The multitude, not feeling their own need, had no sympathy with one who felt his, and sought to drown his importunity. But it was God who had laid it on the heart of the blind beggar—God who, in his appeal to the rejected Messiah, rebuked the incredulity of His people as miserable, and poor, and blind as he, yea, more so, incomparably more, because they felt it not, and owned not their king. For them He was but Jesus of Nazareth. “And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Son of David, have mercy on me.”

The application of this title is the more strikingly in place and season here, because it is the first occurrence and, one may say, the only instance in Mark, common as it is from the first to the corresponding chapter of Matthew. The nearest approach is in the Lord's reference to Psalms in chapter 12. This, as well as chapter 11:9, 10, may show how truly guided of God Bartimaeus was—the type, doubtless, of the remnant of the latter day, whose eyes will be opened of the Messiah before He is in publicly-recognized relationship with Jerusalem.

But let us turn to the foreshadowing of the “mercy that endureth forever.” No rebuke came from Jesus. On the contrary, He stood still and said, Call him.1 “And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth for thee. And be, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.” Mark, not Matthew, mentions the cloak cast off in the alacrity that hastened at the invitation of Jesus; yet Matthew, not Mark, was an eyewitness.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do for thee? The blind man said to him, Rabboni [My Master], that I may recover sight. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Go, thy faith hath healed thee. And immediately he recovered sight, and was following Jesus in the way.” Luke alone adds the expressed moral effect on the part both of the blind man and of all the people that saw the miracle: be glorified God, as they gave Him praise. But this is thoroughly the province of Luke, as must have been observed, in fact, by every reader of ordinary attention.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 10:32-45, Remarks on

That were now on the road to Jerusalem, where the disciples well knew enmity to their Master was most deadly. Hence when Jesus went before them, “they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid.” They were not more astonished at His calm facing the danger than they shrank from their own exposure to it. They were still attached to earthly life, though they would have liked to have spent it under Messiah's reign, sitting every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, with none to make them afraid. But to follow the path which led through persecution to death was far as yet from being a privilege and honor in their eyes. Even Christ they knew after the flesh: the glory of His death and resurrection was wholly unfelt as yet. Hence the Lord Jesus “took again the twelve and began to tell them what things should

happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day be shall rise again." (Ver. 33, 34.) Thus the fullest testimony was given, not indiscriminately, but to chosen witnesses, though complete for the purposes of God among men. Matthew alone singles out, as was suitable, that form of death, the cross, which stumbled the natural mind of the Jew, while Luke (chap. 18:31, 34), as his manner is, draws attention to the accomplishment of the Scriptures, not in specific detail like Matthew, but as a whole, adding to it the non-intelligence of the disciples.

Then come the sons of Zebedee, "James and John (with their mother, as we know from Matthew), saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant us that we may sit, one on thy right hand and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory." (Ver. 35-37.) How often the carnal mind betrays itself in the faithful even in the domain of faith! How weak as yet were those destined to be pillars! How the Master shines in presence even of the most blessed among His servants! They knew not what they asked. This was no question for the suffering Son of man on His way to the cross; but rather could they drink of what it was His to drink? could they be baptized with the baptism that was before Him? Alas! ambition even in the things of the kingdom is soon followed by confidence in self: "We are able." What an answer! Need we wonder that these two also forsook Jesus and fled in the hour of the cross? Nevertheless, the Lord seals their answer with His promise of His own bitter portion, inward and outward; but lets them know that those high places around Himself in glory were not His to give, but for those for whom it is prepared. He refuses to depart from that morally highest place in such a world as this—God's servant among men. But if the two sons of Zebedee thus betrayed their ignorance of Christ's moral glory, how did the rest carry themselves? Not with sorrow of heart for their brethren. "When the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John." How often our fleshly resentment at the pride of another makes manifest the pride which dwells in our own hearts and breaks out in an indignation as unseemly as the evil which provokes it! "But Jesus called them unto him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Ver. 42-45.)

This is love which serves, not flesh which seeks to be served. It is the animating motive and spirit, and not a question of position, ecclesiastic or ministerial; for I doubt not be who was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles was the one who was most of all imbued with the mind which was in Christ Jesus, and this not only in his own soul but also in his service. Paul was bondsman of all. "His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" (2 Cor. 11:23-29.) It was for the Son of man alone not only to minister but to give His life a ransom for many.

Remarks on Mark, Mark 10:17-31, Remarks on

The Lord had vindicated marriage according to its beginning from God against the Pharisees. He had blessed babes in spite of rebuking but now rebuked disciples. We have Him next eagerly sought out by the rich young ruler. "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" There was no lack of moral integrity here, no failure in reverence to one who was instinctively felt to be superior, no indolence that avoided trouble; but earnestness was there, honest respect for that righteous man, and a sincere desire to learn a new lesson and take a fresh step in well-doing. It was nature doing its best, yet fundamentally at fault; for his question assumed that man was good and could do good—man as he is. His very salutation of honor to Jesus proved that His person was unknown, and therefore the truth unknown both as to God and man. Had the young ruler believed Him to be the Son of the living God, he would not have accosted Him with "Good Master" —a style suitable enough to a respected and honored teacher, but both needless and improper in addressing One who was equal with God and was God. But the evil of man he had never realized, the total, hopeless sin and ruin of the heart in God's sight. Hence the need of such an One as Jesus was unfelt, of One who, God and man, came down to the depths of sin in divine love and is raised up to the throne of God in divine righteousness, who suffered all on earth from God on behalf of guilty man, that He might have man redeemed, reconciled, justified, glorified, by and with Himself in heaven, and in both, as in all things, God glorified through Jesus Christ.

Our blessed Lord therefore refuses the honor which ignored the only just foundation for it, jealous for the truth as well as for God's glory, as indeed it is the only real love to man. If not God, Christ was not good; if good, He is God. "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him." (Ver. 18-21.) It is striking to observe these two things following—the comparative severity of our Lord's answer and the express assertion that He looked upon him and loved him. The one showed how He dealt with amiable nature, intruding into what it knows not; the other, how no curtness of rebuke for spiritual kindness, no consciousness that the young man was faithless and would depart sorrowful at His word, hindered the Savior's love for that which was sweet and attractive in burrow nature. Our Lord gave its full value to his honoring of the commandments, which He does not contradict; but He meets him on the ground he had chosen, not of a broken-hearted convicted sinner asking what he must do to be saved, but of a blameless man who was conscious of nothing wrong in his life, but who felt desires after a more excellent way from One so pre-eminently excellent in his eyes as Jesus, who accordingly "said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross and follow me." Jesus had done infinitely more; for though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. But this ruler knew not the grace of our Lord, though he could not but see His ineffable moral beauty; he knew not His grace, for His glory was unknown to him. Little did he think even when he kneeled to Jesus, that there stood before him One who, subsisting in the

form of God, thought it not robbery to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a bondman and was made in the likeness of men, and having been found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It was not then that He who repudiated all good save in One, save God, shrank from that test which He represented to the good-seeking ruler: yet the one thing the young and ardent Jew lacked was oh! how incomparably short of the path of Jesus both in life and death. Still it was far too great a demand on the loveliest sample of humanity which, as far as we read, crossed the path of the Lord; and it made plain in his sad departing footsteps to others, if it did not discover to his own conscience, the covetousness of his heart, the value he set upon his possessions, the trust he had in riches, the little heart he had for treasure in heaven, care for himself rather than for others, even for the poor, of whom the Lord ever thought much, and above all, that so taking up the cross and following Christ was harder measure than he was prepared for. What is man? wherein is he to be accounted of? Well may we worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. “There is none good but one, that is, God.” How true, and how blessed for us that so it is! “Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.' Jesus had but disclosed the shadow, and not the very image, of divine goodness in Himself; yet did the beauty of the amiable devotee consume away like a moth. “And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.” (Ver. 17-22.) Surely every man is vanity.

The great prophet, the perfect minister of grace and truth, turns the incident to the good of His own. “And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' Even the disciples understood not, but were astonished at His words. They too knew not there is no good thing in man, or in the advantages of the world, for the kingdom of God. “But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.” Thus Jesus softens in no respect the rigor of the truth. The very blessings, as men speak, of the flesh and of the world turn out hindrances in divine things. With men, then, salvation is impossible. It is a question here too of God; but blessed be His name, all things are possible with Him. (Ver. 23-27.)

What hearts are ours that even the solemn circumstance of the ruler, and the still more solemn sentence of the Lord which fell upon the amazed ears of the disciples, drew forth a self-complacent inquiry from him who seemed to be somewhat, yea a pillar among those nearest to Jesus! “Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.” (Ver. 28-31.) It is much to be noted that the Lord speaks but of abandoning nature for His own sake (and the gospel's, as is added most appropriately in this gospel only), even as Peter speaks of their leaving all and following Him. To leave for the reward would be worthless, and moreover never stands. Christ is the only efficacious attraction, the motive that governs a renewed heart. There is pasture for the sheep, there is the flock also; but the sheep follow Christ, for they know His voice. Rewards will follow by and by, but saints follow not the rewards but the Lord. As our evangelist speaks of the gospel's sake, so he shows that the faithful sufferer receives an hundredfold now in this time for what he has left, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But, says the Lord, (and if it was a significant word to Peter, is it not for us all?) many first shall be last, and the last first. Righteous judgment will in the long run reverse many a thought founded on that which meets the eye. It is the end of the race that tells, not the start, though God is unrighteous to no person and to no act. It is well therefore here, as before, to trust in God and His grace. “There is none good but one, that is, God.”

Remarks on Mark, Mark 10:1-16, Remarks on

Our Lord now starts on His last journey, leaving Galilee for the borders of Judea, by the other side of the Jordan. When crowds resort to Him, He, as He was wont, again taught. And full of moral value and divine light His teaching is. May our souls weigh it well! We are apt to be one-sided. If we seize the special manifestation of God's grace, we are apt to overlook, neglect, or enfeeble the great and unchanging principles of good and evil; if we keep bold of that which abides from first to last, the danger is that we leave not adequate room for His sovereign action at particular times. In Christ, the truth, this was never so. All the ways of Gad had their place; no one thing was sacrificed to another, yet this too without a leveling sameness; for even in God, while all is perfect and all harmonious, each attribute has not equal place, but there is that which is pre-eminent. Jesus, the Son and Servant of God, maintains on every side the truth of God in the face of sin and confusion.

First, He vindicates, according to the unstained light and tender goodness of God, the marriage relation. It is the most momentous step of human life, and the pillar of the social fabric. How thankful should we be to have the Lord of glory pronouncing on it in His passage through this world! The need was great. For even in the holy land, and among those who stood high for their sanctity, with the law of God before their eyes and its precepts, rightly or wrongly interpreted, continually on their tongues, how low and loose was the theory, how basely selfish the practice! He was here on His errand of love with its eternal issues; yet would He stop in His course and cause the light of heaven to shine even across the path of dark designing men, recalling them to hear how God made man to live, as well as removing the veil which hindered disciples from seeing how He who was God would die.

“And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Ver. 2-9.) It is only the facts recorded by historians or the researches of men of learning into the Rabbinical remains which betray the excessive levity of the Jews as to marriage. The true obligations of the tie were unknown; and a wife's place had no more stability than a servant's, if so much indeed. He asks what Moses commanded; they answer what Moses allowed; whereas our Lord shows how evidently it was in respect of their hardheartedness he so wrote. In truth the law made nothing perfect. Not the gospel only, but the beginning of creation bore its witness to the true thought of God, who made them male and female. How admirably the Lord applies, not only the fact of Gen. 1, but the words of Gen. 2:24! All other obligations of

nature, even the filial, must give place, as their own Pentateuch proved in principle as well as history; and the new relationship from the first was abstractedly indissoluble. They were no longer two, but one flesh, even if not kindred in spirit. This was not merely Adam's language, but God's deed; and if He united, let not man put asunder. Such was the Lord's bright and beautiful unfolding of the law to those who took advantage of what was permitted for a season. Grace and truth ever adorn what the legal spirit perverts to self-righteousness on the one hand, or self-indulgence on the other.

To the disciples (in the house, as Mark only here tells us) the Lord gives the stringent reply that, “Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her; and if a woman shall put away her husband and marry another, she committeth adultery.” (Ver. 10-12.) Here is the dark converse of sin in this relationship: no license of man can consecrate the annulling that tie while in the flesh.

The next incident is equally full of moral loveliness and divine grace—full of instruction too, as here we have not Pharisees but disciples in painful collision with the mind of the Master. “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And be took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them.” (Ver. 13-16.) Our evangelist specially marks the deep displeasure of the Lord. And no wonder. Indeed it was part of His perfectness. For it was not only that they betrayed their own Rabbi-like self-importance, which makes much of ceremony, much also of knowledge, and overlooks the power of grace and the manifestation of divine affections; but besides, they took His place, falsified Him and the God of all grace that sent Him and the essential character of that kingdom which He was about to establish. Suffer not little children, babes, to come to Him! hinder them! Why, not only of such is the kingdom of God, but whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a babe shall not enter therein. Such is the Lord's solemn sentence. To be nothing for Jesus to receive is just the condition of entrance. May we too have faith to put our babes with ourselves before Him and count on His sure blessing!

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Blind Bartimaeus

No sight was more characteristic of our Lord's ministry than His grace to the blind. It has the first place given to it in the answer to John the Baptist's message. A special case is presented in Matt. 9:27, another in Mark 8:22, and the more general fact in Luke 7:21 with other cures, but the most marked of all in John 9 Yet there is this striking circumstance common to the three earlier Gospels, that the final testimony which the Lord offers to the Jews in or near Jerusalem opens with the healing of the blind man near Jericho. Only Matthew, as his manner is, tells us of two (compare 8 28, 9 27). Mark and Luke were led to dwell on what was for other reasons the more remarkable of them. It is idle to conceive separate occasions, one on entering and the other in quitting Jericho. For Matthew and Mark are express that the miracle was wrought on going out from the town. The phrase of Luke is so indeterminate as to fall in with that statement. He does not say, "as he drew nigh " or " when he came near" to Jericho; but while in the neighborhood. This was as true when He went out as when He came in.1

" And they come to Jericho, and as he was going out from Jericho and his disciples and a considerable crowd, the son of Timmus, Bartimaeus the blind, was sitting by the wayside begging. And having heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, O Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me. And many were rebuking him that he might be silent, but he cried out so much the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still and said that he should be called. And they call the blind, saying to him, Be of good courage, rise: he calleth thee. And, throwing away his garment, he sprang up and came unto Jesus. And Jesus in answer said to him, What wilt thou that I should do to thee? And the blind said, Teacher (Rabboni), that I may receive sight. And Jesus said to him, Go thy way; thy faith hath healed (saved) thee. And immediately he received sight, and followed him in the way " (vers. 46-52).

Observe how the blind Israelites at the beginning of our Lord's ministry appeal to Him as Son of David. It was a matter of revealed promise that Messiah should open their eyes; and as they believed with their heart, they confessed with their mouth, and got the blessing. It was not so with the Canaanite, though she too believed, and with rare faith. But like many a believer, she at first applied on a wrong ground; from which the Lord led her into the right and true, that she might all the better enjoy the grace that awaited her. Here the call on the Son of David exactly suits the ways of God, when Christ finally presented Himself to the people, about to consummate His rejection to their own utter ruin for the present. It is the starting-point for His last Messianic offer to Jerusalem, where the blind that cried in faith were made to see, and those who said they saw were made blind for their unbelief and enmity.

O my reader, call on the Lord, like the once blind Bartimaeus. Hitherto you have been blind, and have followed blind leaders into the ditch. But Jesus still waits to heal and extricate you. Fear not. Be of good courage, if now you feel your need, and believe that all authority and power are His. Does He not call you as truly as He did the son of Timmus? Read not His words so unbelievingly. These things are written that you may believe unto life and salvation. Profit by the lesson of his earnest importunity. Many, who felt not their own need any more than his, kept rebuking him It was not decorum-in their view who were traveling at ease to perdition. Such cries might be well on the sabbath perhaps, and no doubt on a dying bed; but they were wholly objectionable by the wayside and before a crowd.

The Lord heard as He ever does the call of distress and of faith, took His stand, and bade him be brought before Him. And how graphic the sketch, and instructive the eagerness of the blind man casting away his cloak that he might get to the Lord! Poor as he was, he must lay aside every hindrance and go to Him at once. And Jesus answered his heart, and drew out its desire: "Great Teacher, that I may receive sight." And immediately was it given; he also followed Jesus in the way. For this His sheep do. It is their instinct of life in Him; as it is His word to them, that they may be kept in a world of evil, snares, and danger. But the Lord Jesus guides and guards His own, yet not without their hearing His voice and following Him all the way through. And a stranger will they not follow, as the rule (the only right and safe rule), but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.

Can you say, dear reader, that you have received sight from Jesus? If not, be assured that you are blind as well as in your sins. You are trusting baptism or religious observances or your clergyman in vain, if you suppose that any or all these can give you sight, or life, or propitiation for your sins. Only Jesus avails in answer to your faith, and even Jesus can give you all only by His death for you a guilty sinner. Look to Him, and be saved.